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THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

THE LIFE OF A PRIEST

MY OWN EXPERIENCE

1867-1912

BY

ALBERT HOUTIN

1867-1926

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

FRENCH literature and the history of French religious thought in our time suffered a heavy loss through the death of Albert Houtin, who passed away after a long illness at his quiet home in Paris towards the end of July, 1926.

Of a deeply religious temperament, he entered as a novice a Benedictine monastery, and found there for a time the paradise of his dreams. But soon the internal dissensions by which he discovered the Order to be torn brought disillusionment, and reluctantly he resigned his cherished ideal of a monastic life. But for long his religious faith remained unshaken ; he was ordained a priest, and for years ministered at the altar. Always a student, his bent to reading and reflection led to his appointment as professor in a Catholic seminary, and it was in the course of the historical studies which the duties of his office imposed on him that he gradually and sorrowfully recognized the rents and fissures in the foundations of that marvellous structure, the Catholic Church, which presents to the outward eye an appearance so vast, so venerable, so imposing. In the long struggle between faith and reason victory finally remained with the intellect ; the impulse of sentiment yielded to the evidence of history ; and step by step the shepherd was himself driven from the fold into which he had sought to guide the lost sheep and to carry the strayed lambs of the Christian flock.

Of this prolonged conflict all Houtin's works are a precious, perhaps an imperishable, record. Though his clear, logical, and characteristically French intelligence compelled him to abandon the traditional dogmas of Catholicism, and indeed of Christianity, to the end of his life all his preoccupations,

all his interests, were religious ; his thought dwelt perpetually on those eternal mysteries of the world and of man of which in his youth he fondly imagined that he had found the true, the eternal solution. He did not marry ; he hardly mixed with the world ; he shunned notoriety as steadily as many men seek it ; to the last he remained at heart a Benedictine. But his works will survive him ; they are a treasure-house of religious psychology and a permanent record of the currents of thought which, in this and the last generation, have been surely, if silently, drifting the ship of faith farther and farther away from its old moorings in Christianity.

In this country Houtin's writings are almost unknown, though one of them, perhaps the least valuable of all, *A Short History of Christianity*, has lately been translated into English. It is much to be desired that they should reach a wider circle of readers in English-speaking lands. Among them, if translations are to be made into our language, it might be well to begin with the two early volumes which deal with Biblical questions in France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ; or perhaps the most fitting introduction to them might be the author's last work—the story of his own life as a priest, which he tells with perfect simplicity and transparent sincerity as a document of religious biography. The book has much more than a purely personal interest. It is doubtless typical of the sad experience of many who lack either the skill or the courage to confess their disillusionment to the world. To the few who were privileged to enjoy the writer's friendship the book will always bring back the memory of a stainless life and of a sweet and gentle disposition marred by no touch of weakness. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

J. G. FRAZER.

*Trinity College, Cambridge.*¹

¹ Reprinted, by kind permission, from the *Times* (August 4, 1926).

ALBERT HOUTIN : A MEMOIR¹

By the loss of Albert Houtin in July, 1926, a large gap has been left in the little army of brave soldiers of right. Uncompromisingly sincere in his work as a historian and a biographer, and an iconoclast as regards religious legends or usurped reputations, idols, and superstitions, his unconquerable quest for truth and right had become a religion for him. So much is universally granted, I think, by friends and loyal adversaries alike. But that Albert Houtin was a keen mystic by temperament and by the strongest aspirations of his soul ; that his earnestness, and even cruelty, towards his own long-cherished beliefs and idols was prompted by the very spiritual forces he had derived from his mysticism ; that he cried to the last in an agony, as of Gethsemane, " Let this cup pass from me " ; that he was goaded on by the inexorable command of his conscience—step by step dislodged from all bulwarks and positions in succession—to climb the bloody steep of a Calvary to crucifixion : of this, the hidden tragedy and the secret of Albert Houtin's life, very few are aware. It is certainly not known by those who were acquainted with Houtin only as the writer and the polemic, and fancied that he revelled in demolition and iconoclasm, in unmasking hypocrisies and crying on the housetops what he had heard whispered in the ear.

Such men, unable to understand the soul of a priest who had chosen a God of Truth as his heritage, approached him with levity, as a mere scandal-loving pamphleteer,

¹ Reproduced, by kind permission, from the *Contemporary Review*, June, 1927.

and they were often punished by a few sharp words and a well-deserved frown. Yet it is these folk who are mainly responsible for his widespread reputation as a sceptic and even a cynic. "Because I have never insisted on the sentimental aspect of my crisis," so he writes in his autobiography¹ published shortly before his death, "I have often been represented as a pure intellectual, only too happy to get rid of a mythology. The truth is quite otherwise: my deliverance was most painful."

I desire here to show from his own portrait of himself, and from the experience of a fifteen years' friendship, *il cuor ch'egli ebbe*, while also throwing some light on the religious significance of his worship of truth. "I think," he says, "there cannot be anything sadder in the world than the moment when a priest becomes aware that his dogmatic tenets are rudely refuted by some clearly established fact." In Houtin's early years all the longings and home-sickness of his heart had been for the exquisite joys of pietism, for a life spent in the Benedictine monastery of Solesmes, in which for a time he lived as a postulant. *Ora et labora* had been his cherished ideal. Commenting on the later peaceful years of his friend, the Rev. Arthur Galton, once a Catholic priest and afterwards a clergyman of the Church of England, he tells of his longing for rest, and envy of "the peace of so many clergymen in various churches—a peace which I would not have for myself." It is the mystics and the earnest believers, he remarks, who are often the most radical rebels; and he quotes M. L. Dugas' words: "The spirits who are to become the most independent and free are, in fact, precisely those who have begun as the most docile."

It was because of its identification of truth with God that the Church obtained the service of men like Houtin, Tyrrell,

¹ *Une Vie de Prêtre : Mon Expérience, 1867-1912.*

Marcel Hébert, and Loisy, men with souls enriched by the sterling gold which they found in the ore of religion. But, as Houtin writes : "The Church had not succeeded in killing within my soul, as in many others, the love of truth or strength of will, and economic considerations left me quite untouched. I was a soul going straight along its way." Thus he quotes from Renan : "I have been shaped by the Church ; I owe her all that I am, and I shall never forget it. The Church has cut me off from the profane world, and I am thankful for it."¹

Houtin's life was not specially rich in events of public interest ; his case was that of a scientific critical modernist, and his books and articles, save for a few years during which he taught languages and history at the Petit Séminaire at Angers, were his only battlefield. Once in his life he gave a public address in a chapel. It was on the occasion of the "Boston Conference of Unitarians and other liberal religious thinkers and workers" in 1907. His sermon was an outspoken denial of the Divinity of Christ, and a proclamation of the break-up of Orthodox Christianity. His travels in Spain, Germany, England, Italy, and the United States, important as some of them were in bringing on the critical stage of his religious experience and in getting him first-hand material for his work, had no immediate external consequence. His material distress and spiritual sufferings, tragic as they were, were hidden from his friends by the veil of his absorbing worship of truth. He has described, in pages which will endure side by side with those of Renan on the same subject, his first awakening, his disillusion and disenchantments, after his ecclesiastical training in the Seminary of Angers :—

Disillusion marks the life of all priests, unless they

¹ *La Crise du Clergé*, p. 225.

succeed by dint of self-suggestion in becoming what the Church terms a saint. Their imaginations having been fired by pious mothers who direct their good sons towards the Sanctuary, they enter the seminary like the Magi travelling in search of the King of the Jews, following the Star. There, in the Seminary, the process of suggestion goes on unrelentingly, magnifying before their eyes priesthood as the source of honour and glory, the splendour of life. But, except for the sermons they hear, what a prosaic initiation! Instead of the knowledge of God they have been dreaming of, they receive a crabbed scholastic philosophy; and when their intelligence keenly longs for food and development, it is pent up and crushed down. Still the young people persevere, persistent and full of confidence, and their superiors are careful to represent their aversion and weariness as trials intended by God. The enlistment having taken place, the young levites try to live "supernaturally," till a day comes when they have to acknowledge that they lack even those natural resources which human reason supplies when it has not been weakened; when the bishop, the authentic official authority in the Roman Catholic Church, causes them to realize—if they had not guessed it for themselves, and if their love of truth has not already been killed in their bosom by the training they have undergone—what the Church means by "Catholic Truth."

The probationer, thus disillusioned about convent life, had become priest and teacher of history in the Petit Séminaire, devoted to his task and still "leading the life of a monk," when, having investigated certain hagiographic mediæval legends about the origin of the Church of Angers—which he dealt with critically in a paper, expanded afterwards into a volume, on *The Nineteenth Century Controversy About the Origin of the French Churches from the Apostles*—he was warned by his bishop that those subjects were taboo, not open to criticism. Further experience was to teach him that the category of the "untouchable" covered the entire field relating to church history, the origin of Christianity, revelation, dogmas, and their philosophical implications. "How

many times have I been told : if you meddle with any particular point, all the building will shake and crash."

Albert Houtin was not a man to be deterred from further investigation by any such catastrophic outlook. After reading Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, which he termed "a handbook of scepticism," he took his first "inventory" of his beliefs, and when he realized that his work as a teacher was frustrated by the opposition of his surroundings he resigned his position and started on his life-long pilgrimage in search of an honest clerical vocation. Hunted from diocese to diocese, and driven from place after place—even from the humblest ones—for his stubborn researches and bold publications, he was reduced to distress ; until, as a sequel to the issue of his volume, *La Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France au XIX^e Siècle* in 1902, he was deprived of the right of celebrating Mass. Later, after the publication of his books, *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque* and *L'Américanisme*, all three volumes were condemned by Papal Authority and inscribed in the *Index* of forbidden books (December, 1903). He went on without flinching, more determined than ever to continue his task of unmasking falsehood and hypocrisy wherever he met them, regardless of friends or foes. He was now thirty-five years old. Though his intellectual faculties enjoyed "perfect and full clearness," his sensibility was still far from recovering its balance. "I had suffered much," he writes, "was wounded, broken." Though his belief in a divinely founded Church had been shattered utterly, he still adhered to natural religion ; he still cherished symbols and mysticism ; he still loved the Roman Catholic Church—in spite of his break with its authorities—"because of its great mystery of unity and its power for good" ; and he wondered whether he "could not, even ought not to, help the great attempt at a religious evolution, or even revolution," which was now being carried on by the Modernist movement in every Church and religion.

And, instead of looking for a shelter in a harbour of rest, he undertook the task "of purifying religion and enfranchising the human spirit from the secular errors which still enjoy in every part of the world enormous political and social power."

The part Houtin played during the struggle for Church Disestablishment in France (1906-7) was far from being generally known and sufficiently appreciated, owing to his use of pseudonyms when writing in the Press. It was he, and he alone, who published in the columns of *Le Siècle*, and maintained against the flat denials of the Vatican and its organs, the true account of the famous session in which the French bishops in plenary assembly approved by a majority of twenty-two the formation of "Associations of Catholics," both canonical and legal, as provided by the Disestablishment Law. Eventually he published the original documents of the sessions, which created throughout the Catholic world an enormous impression while "baffling the abettors of a civil war" in France. It was he, again, who published the *Supplique d'un groupe de Catholiques Français au Pape Pie X*, a most eloquent protest and a cry of anguish against the fate of religion in France.

In preparation for this period of strenuous struggle, Houtin had visited Rome, there to come into contact with the most remarkable Italian personalities of that period and with liberal Catholic circles. It was an old Catholic aristocrat, the Marquis Vitelleschi, who had given him the advice never to break with the Pope, but rather to make formal submission to all the decrees of the Roman authorities while going on with his writings, for "life is a comedy ; and, however honestly we may act it, we shall not prevent its being a comedy." Had not Pope Pius IX himself said : " Buffoons on this side, buffoons on that side ; we are all buffoons " ? " No," Houtin energetically protests, in the words of William James—" no ; life is rather a stern tragedy, and what is

most bitter in it has the best taste. On the world-stage it is heroism, and only heroism, which acts the principal parts. It is in heroism—we feel clearly—that the mystery of life lies hidden.” Of the Marquis di San Giuliano, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs at the outbreak of the war in 1914, he writes ; “ He was one of the most irreligious spirits it ever fell to my lot to know. Towards Jesus he professed such radical and constant contempt as I had never heard before in my life.....he expressed no sympathy for my utopia of modernizing Christianity. In spite of this he died—the first of Italian Ministers to receive this ritual distinction—with the Pope’s benediction ” (page 350). After his return to Paris the *Index* condemned (December, 1906) Houtin’s further volumes : *La Question Biblique au XX^{me} Siècle* ; *La Crise du Clergé* ; *Un Prêtre Marié : Charles Perraud* ; *Evêques et Diocèses*. *L’Histoire du Modernisme Catholique* followed in 1912, after the period of the “ black terror ” of the anti-Modernist persecution (1907-9) whose events Houtin depicted day by day in the columns of *Le Siècle*.

It was during the crisis of the anti-Modernist struggle, and in consequence of it, that the present writer became personally acquainted with Albert Houtin in Paris, and had the opportunity of visiting him almost daily for several months. Chapter twenty-two of Houtin’s autobiography gives, for those who have forgotten the dramatic events of those fatal years, a summary full of lively interest from one who took a tragic part in them ; the “ double comedy ” played both by Roman Catholic priests who took an oath of allegiance to Catholic doctrine, and by bishops who tendered it ; the wild hunting of “ heretics ” ; the lowering of the moral character and scientific standards of studies in Roman Catholic seminaries ; the suppression of liberalism in every shape or form in the Catholic Church ; the definition by official decisions of Biblical, historical, and exegetical

questions. The pitiful spectacle of the *débâcle* which ensued when most of the outstanding personalities of the movement reeled and bent before the storm—of the melting before the fire of persecution of all “those immense aspirations towards more light and liberty” which drew from Father Tyrrell’s pen the sad comment : “Courage is the very rarest of all virtues, and has almost innumerable counterfeits”—finally stripped off Albert Houtin’s remaining illusions as to “the religion of the future coming by a natural evolution from Roman Catholicism.” Marcel Hébert, Tyrrell, Alfred Loisy, and others, passed through the same crisis, and arrived at much the same conclusions on this point, however different their further steps and final positions were.

The second “inventory” of his religious beliefs which Houtin had drawn up in 1904, while he thought he was still a “Christian Theist,” could no longer represent his actual feelings :—

My further work led me to think that the task of modernizing Christianity was a mistake. There is no divine revelation to be found in it more than in any other positive religion, and it is based largely on frauds, no less than they. Any effort to supply it with new bases or new title-deeds is as vain as chimerical.

It appeared to him as if—

All interpretations devised by Modernists to replace worn-out myths and reinterpret old formulæ were liable to the radical criticism of Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. The history of religion is a long attempt to reconcile old customs with a new reason, to find out a reasonable theory to explain an absurd practice.

Houtin now found the time had come to sever himself officially from the Roman Catholic Church. In April, 1912, he put off the priestly habit which he had worn till then “as the old uniform of idealism.....through a crisis of Materialism,” during a period when he still hoped for “a religious

renaissance and transformation," and he became a layman. His autobiography ends on that date, with these quotations from Doudan and Renan :—

"It is not necessary to be a believer..... ; but we are bound to be sincere : this is the greatest essential condition of our moral being. There is more moral truth in the doubts of an honest man than in the profession of faith of people who wear the yoke of convention."
"Man belongs neither to his language nor to his race ; he belongs but to himself, as he is a free being, and therefore a moral being."

The following fourteen years of Houtin's life were mainly devoted to valuable works of history and biography—the biographies of Hyacinthe Loyson and of Marcel Hébert, *Un Prêtre Symboliste* ; *Une Grande Mystique*, *Madame Bruyère*, *Abbesse de Solesmes* ; *Courte Histoire du Christianisme* ; and, last, his own biography, *Une Vie de Prêtre : Mon Expérience*, possibly to be followed by a second volume for which material exists among his manuscripts, together with supplements to his *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique* and to his biography of Hyacinthe Loyson. His great qualities as a writer, especially his limpidity, scrupulous honesty, verve, humour ; his gift of making history vivid and fascinating as a novel, are to be found in all these works of his later life, enhanced by his maturer experience, yet tinged thereby with a deep note of pessimism and sadness.

These works occupied his spare time. Meanwhile he pursued his valuable work in the *Musée Pédagogique* in Paris, as assistant to the Director, a position in which his broad culture and close acquaintance with educational problems made his assistance to teachers in every branch invaluable. Friends and foes alike were always sure of being treated in Houtin's historical portraits with the same truth to nature and absolute impartiality ; though they could

rely on his constant care and effort—unless the superior rights of truth demanded otherwise—to spare reputations, to conceal foibles, and to leave in discreet shadow everything which might hurt the living or offend the memory of the dead. All through his autobiography this anxiety not to exalt the truth at the expense of charity is clearly noticeable. That he was a scandal-monger and a cynical “gossip” only those could say who met for the first time in their lives an embodiment of truth, and were at a loss to understand it. “Will the human heart ever be freed from the ‘natural root’ of disguise, falsehood, hypocrisy” (Pascal), or shall we believe that hypocrisy and falsehood are absolutely necessary to every human society (Paulhan)?

About Houtin’s private life I will only say that towards his real friends he was ever most obliging, kind, and faithful. He never failed to take an earnest practical interest in all their work and life, their joys and sorrows. His tender affection for his old parents, especially his mother, was most touching. The purity and austerity of his life commanded the respect of his adversaries and the admiration of his friends. That in the latter part of his life his outlook had become more and more pessimistic is to be accounted for, not only by his sad experiences and the death of his fondly-loved parents, but even more by his health, for he suffered from heart-disease. He remained to the last faithful to his ideal, serene in face of death, confident in the goodness of his cause, pervaded by an all-absorbing ideal which retained the full essential character of religion even while co-existing with the language of religious disillusion and apparent scepticism. In a letter to me dated April 14, 1926, and written at a time when death seemed imminent, he says :—

Dearest Friend,—It is a ghost who writes to you..... Several times I have been within a hair’s breadth of death.....Illness is a “retreat.” I hope mine, which

was very long, will not prove useless. I have been toned up by it, and hardened anew in the resolution—if there had been any need for it—to work and fight to the end. I have drawn up a fourth “inventory,” which has confirmed the preceding ones. Should my convalescence not lead to recovery, and should I die soon, my satisfaction is that I have uttered most of the things I had to say. Should I survive.....I will go on.

In his last days he wrote :—

It seems to me as if I had started on a fresh youth, a new existence. My illness.....has allowed me to look at everything from the point of view of eternity. The God to whom I had once devoted my life, the Divine Mother to whom I had addressed my prayers so often, have not visited my death-bed to bring me the least light.....This illness, having failed to carry my whole being to the grave, has succeeded at least in burying all my former self. I have risen again more anxious than ever before to work for the progress of reason and to oppose superstition.

He then reviews the illusions and dreams of his early youth, the great illusion of the Catholic priesthood to which he had devoted himself with all his heart until the day when evidence had overwhelmed him ; last, the illusion of Theism, which appears to him now “ but a remnant of theology ; no less weak and objectionable a system than any other metaphysical one.” “ And now,” the statement goes on,

I was there on my death-bed at the very moment when, according to the beliefs of a great part of my life, I was going to surrender my immortal soul to my creator and judge. My creator and judge, forsooth ! I know how man has fashioned him, and how Christians have devised the horrible fable of hell and the absurd theory of priestly absolution. My soul immortal ? No feeling of being immortal at all was then felt.....The meaning of my poor life appeared then clearly before my eyes. My reader, I advise you again and again to be an unbeliever, not to allow yourself to be cheated.....No

one possesses the words of eternal life. The wise man, the well-balanced man, has no need to apply to anybody. He holds fast to his good sense, to clear and certain principles, to his honesty and sincerity.....He accepts the universe as it is, and he does not ask of life what it cannot grant him.....These are the conclusions arrived at by a poor, undeceived Don Quixote.

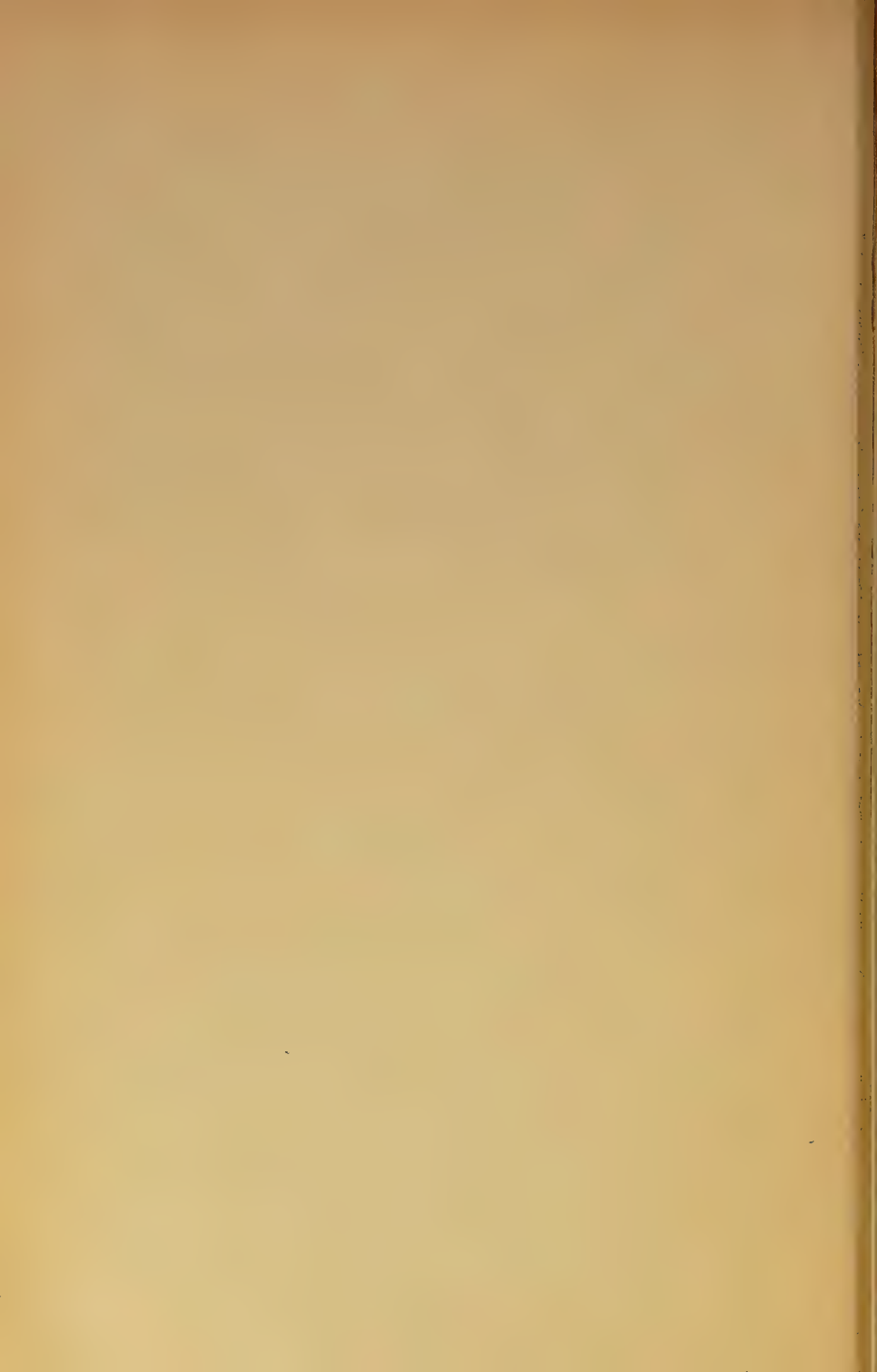
In spite of its pessimistic tone, in spite of the sound of its words, I dare call this the testament of a deeply religious man—ay, of “a saint who disbelieved in God.”

Just as the profession of the creed or the practice of religious acts can add no moral or spiritual value to a man “whose God is his belly,” so no refusal of conventional religious theoretical representations and interpretations of the immediate data of conscience can detract from the religious value and meaning of one’s life; it is the *devotion to a supreme moral ideal* which marks that intensity of life, that spiritual level, which alone can be, and demands to be, called religious. The present writer remembers how he talked this subject over with Houtin more than once, especially one Sunday in Paris after attending a sitting of L’ Union pour la Vérité, and how the conclusion reached was that of a New Testament writer: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is.....to keep himself unspotted from the world.” And Houtin himself wrote: “I was not anxious about my future. Faithful to the direction of my old masters, Pascal, Bossuet, Malebranche.....I had sought truth for itself.” “All our dignity,” says Pascal, “consists in thought. Let us, then, try to think right; this is the beginning of morals.”

The very same spirit in man which we call conscience—the “inner light” of George Fox—is the spirit which works through nature from the lowest degree to the highest, developing everything, according to the laws of its own nature, by a creative evolution. To this spirit Albert Houtin was loyal

to the utmost, even to death. He was the heroic servant of truth, honesty, sincerity, and the worshipper of this, the highest God. "*Bonum et ens convertuntur*": where reality is, goodness is. "The degree of a man's religion is adequately measured only by his degree of high, universal, intense life." So said Houtin himself in a conversation with the present writer. If he did not "feel himself to be immortal," he yet lived with mind fixed on the idea of eternal law; seeing all things, including his own life, "*sub quadam aeternitatis specie*." I repeat, he was "a saint who disbelieved in God," in a God without us, in a God of man's making whom he found inconsistent with the God within, the "God of my heart."

GIOVANNI PIOLI.



CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY NOTE, BY SIR JAMES FRAZER -	v
ALBERT HOUTIN : A MEMOIR, BY PROF. GIOVANNI PIOLI - - - - -	vii
FOREWORD - - - - -	xxiii

CHAP.

I. FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD (1867-1880) -	1
II. MY CLASSICAL STUDIES (1880-1886) - -	10
III. MY PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES (1886-1887) -	17
IV. SOLESMES (1887-1888) - - - -	30
V. MY THEOLOGICAL STUDIES (1888-1891) -	46
VI. PRIESTHOOD (1890-1891) - - - -	65
VII. UNDER-TEACHER (October, 1891-July, 1894)	76
VIII. PROFESSOR OF HISTORY (July, 1894-April, 1901) - - - - -	88
IX. MY FIRST PUBLISHED WORKS (1899-1901)	105
X. MY FIRST INVENTORY (1901) - - -	123
XI. PARIS (April, 1901-April, 1902) - -	136
XII. IN SEARCH OF AN ECCLESIASTICAL APPOINT- MENT (April-October, 1902) - - -	146
XIII. THE CLERGY OF PARIS IN A CRITICAL POSI- TION (1902-1903) - - - - -	156

CHAP.	PAGE
XIV. ON THE "INDEX" (April, 1903-June, 1904)	166
XV. A SECOND INVENTORY (January-June, 1904)	183
XVI. SECRETARY TO A BISHOP (June, 1904-February, 1905) - - - - -	193
XVII. MY JOURNEY TO ROME (March-May, 1905)	203
XVIII. A NEW BOOK ON BIBLICAL CRITICISM (June, 1905-May, 1906) - - - -	211
XIX. THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE (December, 1905-November, 1906) - -	216
XX. THE EXECUTION OF THE SEPARATION LAW (January, 1906-August, 1907) - - -	227
XXI. VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO ENGLAND (September-October, 1907) -	236
XXII. THE INJUNCTIONS OF PIUS X (1907-1909)	244
XXIII. A CONTROVERSY WITH LIBERAL CATHOLICS (1909) - - - - -	250
XXIV. MY THIRD INVENTORY (1910-1912) - -	256
INDEX - - - - -	261

FOREWORD

This is an autobiography, not an apology. After having told the life-stories of so many, why should I not end by telling my own? It is not trivial; it is not flattering; it is not unedifying. Perhaps it will be said that its publication is premature and ought to have been left to my literary executors. But is it not preferable to do one's own business as far as possible? And then, as Mahomet used to say, "the testimony of one living man is worth more than that of ten who are dead."

And, again, everything—absolutely everything that I have to tell—happened before the universal deluge, before the World War. It is very old.

Finally, no one is obliged to read me.

A. H.

Paris, August 24, 1925.

CHAPTER I

FAMILY AND CHILDHOOD

A Short Genealogy—My Father's Family—My Mother's—My First Teacher.

1867–1880

BEFORE relating my strange adventures I think I ought to follow the usual custom and subscribe to the usual formula : descent, environment, time. Consequently I shall give a few details as to my family, though it was very humble, and as to my childhood, though it was in no way remarkable. Besides, were I to neglect these matters, some might ascribe to me a precocious perversity and a heterodox descent which would afford too simple an explanation of the phases of my religious experience.

My name is Christian. It is derived from the Latin *Augustinus*, from which come Aoustin, Houtin, Outin—fairly common in the western provinces of France.

According to the scanty information I have been able to glean as to my genealogy, my paternal and maternal ancestors belonged to the provinces of Anjou and Maine. Does the tenacity of Maine blend in me with what Joachim du Bellay has described as "the sweetness of Anjou"? Influences of heredity are too obscure for me to wish to discuss them.

A few lines may suffice to tell all I know of my father's family. My paternal great-grandfather and grandfather were poor stonemasons. I don't think I ever saw my grandfather more than once. Between his village and that in which my parents lived communication was difficult. Further, when he died I was barely ten. My father was the only member of our family who could go to the funeral. On his return he told my mother the dead man's last instructions : "You will

bury me with the least possible expense. One must not give one's money to the priests." I happened to overhear those words. My mother had brought me up very piously. And for the first time in my life I was shocked. Perhaps my grandmother was no more Christian than my grandfather. She must have lost all faith in the catechism, since she was constantly asking: "Why have we come into this world?"

After my paternal grandfather's death my grandmother came to end her days with us. In my earliest memories she appears to me tall, upright, silent, and sad. She wore perpetual mourning for two sons who had died in the flower of their youth. "How often," she would say, "how often have I shut my door and gone in to weep!" She had not had the consolation of keeping with her her only surviving child—my father; for when very young he had left home to earn his living.

When he had served his seven years in the army, my father worked as baker's man near the little town of La Flèche, at Clermond-Créans, with a good honest soul, whose daughter he married. Soon afterwards he himself set up as baker at La Flèche. I came into the world on October 4, 1867, and was named Albert Jules Henri. Two years after my birth, my maternal grandmother, who was a very enterprising woman, persuaded my parents to change their occupation and to take the linen-draper's shop in the neighbouring village of Luché. There my childhood was passed. There were born my sister, Juliette, and my brother, Marius. At La Flèche I had had a younger brother, who lived but a few hours.

My mother's family, which alone exercised any influence over my education, was extremely religious. My maternal grandfather observed every Catholic rite, firmly and unostentatiously. An old man of sixty, he fasted on every fast day, even when he was digging his fields and his vineyards. He prayed while at work. In the train, if he found his fellow travellers' conversation uninteresting, he would take up his rosary and say his prayers.

My grandmother was even more pious. Her faith would have moved mountains. Nothing could restrain her zeal. She had it from her forbears. Often has she told me of her grandparents' fervent but coarse religion. They lived in the mythology of the prayer which the priest says at the end of mass—the mythology of the evil spirits that go up and down the world intent on the destruction of souls. The nights were full of mysterious terrors. The slightest unexplained sound seemed an annoyance produced by some evil spirit or the solicitation of some soul in purgatory. My grandmother told me that her parents believed horrible things, and that it would be better not to exist than for one's mind to be a prey to such torture. Poor woman! If she became intelligent enough to believe that God does not punish as easily and as harshly as she had always heard preached, at least she believed in a hell of eternal fire, and, after a life spent in piety and self-sacrifice, her last moments were tormented by fear of the devil.

My mother had all her parents' piety. My father had retained nothing but the theistical principles of his catechismal teaching. These principles wounded the sacramentarian devoutness of the family into which he had married. Thus, despite his personal excellence and his love for my mother, for a long while their union was not happy. Catholic dogma came between them. For more than thirty years—that is, until my mother's faith was shaken by my ecclesiastical experiences—the obsession that my unconvertible father would be damned caused her to suffer constant martyrdom.

My earliest recollections go back to the war of 1870.

On his way to take clothes to the soldiers of his village in garrison at Blois and at Vendôme my father had an attack of pneumonia. In order to be able to devote herself entirely to nursing him, my mother sent me to her maternal grandparents at Clermont-Créans. These matters I did not understand, and it was not they that engraved themselves on my memory. What I remember is that at Clermont-Créans I used to get up in the night to watch from the balcony outside my window soldiers defiling interminably along the

high road—Germans going to or returning from Le Mans. Hearing steps on the staircase, I would run and huddle up in my bed, to look as if I had never moved. Sometimes giants in pointed helmets took me in their arms and played with me. Perhaps I recalled to them some dear absent child at the thought of whom they trembled. One day, while we were at dinner, one of these men, drunk with wine and with anger, entered the house like a hurricane. At his threatening words there was a deathly silence which made my blood freeze.

My upbringing was very devout. I was covered with medals and scapularies. Lourdes water figured largely in the pharmacopeia with which I was treated. During one of my little brother's illnesses, in order that he might be cured, I had to make a pilgrimage, or, as it was called, "a journey," on foot to the village of La Fontaine-Saint-Martin, several miles away. The church of that village is dedicated to the thaumaturge of Gaul, who succeeded the deity of the neighbouring spring. As I suffered from sore eyes, I was made to bathe them in a spring called Sainte Apolline, near our village—it also being an old pagan spring which had been Christianized.

When I was old enough to go to school I was sent to the elementary school of the commune, which was the only one at Luché. The schoolmaster was a good soul, and I have pleasant memories of his assistants, whom he often changed. But I did not stay long there. My two uncles, my mother's younger brothers, aspired to professional careers. My parents turned me also in that direction. When questioned as to my tastes, I replied: "I shall be a priest." So it was decided that I should study the classics. Until I was old enough to go to college, the parish priest gave me lessons. My family having arrived at this decision, without waiting for my mother to speak to the abbé, I took the matter into my own hands. One Thursday morning, after catechism, I timidly approached the abbé, and, standing on tiptoe, while he benignly bent down to me, I said: "Sir, will you

show me Latin? I want to be a priest." He burst out laughing, took me to his house, and gave me his Latin grammar, which I bore home in triumph.

At first I had only one lesson a day at the presbytery, and continued to go to school. At the end of a year of this, the priest said he would become my sole teacher; and thus he appointed himself my tutor.

My devout mother and her parents wished for nothing better than that I should be a priest. As for my father, the realization of my childish dreams seemed too remote for him to trouble about it. Consequently he left me to the abbé.

My tutor—for whom I still cherish a deep affection, which he reciprocated—had recently left the High Seminary. He had been the victim of the especially unfortunate régime which prevailed there at that time. He had brought away with him, not only chronic indigestion,¹ but those fantastic ideas which characterized the post-war religious and political reaction. My tutor confidently expected a speedy restoration of the monarchy; and the Pope's temporal power was almost a dogma for him. Like all his brethren, he would have wished France to declare war on Italy, in order to restore to the Pope "the patrimony of St. Peter." Pictures and busts of the sovereign pontiff and the Count of Chambord adorned his room. Beneath the first he had written in his most beautiful hand: "Long live Pius IX, Pope and King!"; beneath the second: "Long live the King!" At church he sang with touching conviction the favourite hymn:—

Have pity, O my God;
Save Rome and France,
In the name of the Holy Heart.

My tutor, who was very devout, sometimes permitted me to join him in his scrupulous and dignified recitation of his breviary.

Before beginning work he prayed, and made imposing signs of the cross. Letters and the arts shared his leisure. When literary inspiration came upon him he would compose

¹ For the régime in the seminaries of that time cf. my *Prêtre symboliste*, Marcel Hébert, ch. ii.

a few homilies for *La Semaine du Fidèle* or poetry for *Le Rosier de Marie*.¹ As an example of his verse, here are the closing lines of a poem written for my first communion :—

How fine, O my God ! is the white and pure soul of my little Albert, full of sweetness ! In thy fatherly heart his young heart expands. But I have seen tears falling from his burning eyes.

"O Jesus," he says, "listen to my prayer. Grant the desire of thy child, who supplicates thee on his knees. Bless, bestow a twofold blessing, on my kind and tender mother. And far from those I love turn away thy wrath.

"Cause to shine in the heart of my beloved father a ray of tenderness and love. Bless my sister, my teacher, and my kind grandmother. Let them with me savour the peace of this great day."²

My tutor's faith was of the old-fashioned kind. He delighted in the most improbable stories, provided they were pious. One day I asked him if certain miracles had really occurred. Dumbfounded for a moment by such a question, he reflected, and then replied solemnly : "On matters so important as that God would never allow us to be deceived." For twenty years this observation enabled me to stifle my doubts—or, in other words, my reason.

In my parents' house the only book at my disposal was a voluminous *Life of the Saints*, belonging to my mother. I plunged into it continually. And this assiduous reading served to render me excessively credulous and persistently idealistic. These stories of saints determined my vocation, as did romances of chivalry that of Don Quixote, or, to be historical, that of St. Ignatius de Loyola.

¹ See, for example, *La Pervenche et la Fauvette* in the number for November 11, 1876.

² Qu'elle est belle, Ô mon Dieu ! l'âme candide et blanche
De mon petit Albert, pleine de tes douceurs !
Dans ton cœur paternel son jeune cœur s'épanche.
Mais de ses yeux brûlants j'ai vu tomber des pleurs.
O mon Jésus, dit-il, écoute ma prière ;
Exauce ton enfant qui t'invoque à genoux,
Bénis, bénis deux fois ma bonne et tendre mère
Et loin de ceux que j'aime écarte ton courroux.
Fais briller dans le cœur de mon cher petit père
Un rayon tout brûlant de tendresse et d'amour.
Bénis ma sœur, mon maître et ma bonne grand-mère :
Qu'ils goûtent avec moi la paix d'un si beau jour.

Another influence would seem to have developed my emotions in the same direction: the village church, a noble monastic building, which was injured by lightning in 1921. During service I used to gaze lovingly at the choir, with its slender columns and its high windows. Such a type of architecture, soaring aloft, has its snares for certain temperaments. It inspires them with dangerous reveries. Nevertheless, though it may have suggested perilous ideas, my village church brought me a revelation of art. It associated in my mind the ideas of beauty and religion. And in certain aspects are they not connected? What is religion in its most idealized form if not an explanation of the ugliness and injustice of life, a hope that one day all will be beautiful and good?

I generally took my recreation with my teacher, accompanying him on his walks. Sometimes we went along the clear and winding Loir. The village of Luché is situated halfway up hills scattered along the right bank of the little river. Opposite, on the left, extends a plain traversed by the rectangular lines of tall poplar trees. I knew those meadows well, also the fir plantations and the park of the château of Mervé. Sometimes, on the right bank, we climbed the hills, which in that direction limited my usual horizon. That peaceful landscape, extensive and varied, measured in its dignity and of a contour almost Greek, seems to harmonize with or perhaps even to have formed my temperate spirit.

As my mother was careful to keep me from playing and loafing with the street boys of my age, my childhood was as calm as the lazy Loir, as calm as the village, completely agricultural, without industries of any kind. This constant peace was hardly disturbed save by the echoes of political strife; they reached me, however, at home and in the presbytery. Those were days when republicans were beginning to impress their triumphs on the old monarchical parties who had been finally vanquished. But the latter, still influential from the social point of view and more cultured than their opponents, took their revenge by humiliating them and satirizing them in popular songs. Bitter feuds resulted, in my village at

least. Sometimes my father was involved. The mayor, who was bright red, detested him as a dangerous citizen because he was an opportunist, because he left me to be educated by the priest, and because he was the only inhabitant of the commune who caused a scandal by taking in *Le Soleil*, an Orleanist newspaper.

These incidents served to form my political opinions, and my excellent tutor did not find it difficult to make me a fervent royalist. He added formulas to my own experience. On his authority I believed the Bourbons to be kings of France by divine right. What was this "divine right" to which he constantly referred? Naturally, I thought no more of inquiring than of questioning my catechism; but I believed in it none the less firmly. And as all my thoughts found expression in religious exercises, I made an addition to the litany of the saints, and every day I invoked two hitherto uncanonized martyrs—Louis XVI and M^{me} Elizabeth. The circumstances of my life were not such as to interest me in anything modern. Priesthood was my only perspective. My father and my uncles hoped I should turn to some other career. When I was thirteen it was decided that I should go to college.

The choice of a scholastic institution is difficult for villagers who are not rich, and who lack means of acquiring information. My family from the first refused to consider the two establishments which my uncles had entered: the Lower Diocesan Seminary of Précigné—then in its decline, so it was said—and the Jesuit college of Le Mans, attended by pupils too rich for me to associate with. My mother wrote to consult Mgr. Freppel, who was thought to be a great man. He naturally replied by recommending his own, the Lower Seminary. The course of study is very thorough, he said, and all social careers are prepared for.¹ My parents decided to send me there.

Before leaving the neighbourhood in which my childhood was spent, it may not be uninteresting to note how great is

¹ Autograph letter of August 31, 1880.

the difference between what it was then and what it became forty-four or forty-five years later.

In the earlier days my village was still Catholic. On Sunday every one went to mass ; and not seldom men attended vespers also. The concourse of peasants and peasantesses gave an animated, festive air to the village. Now, Sunday is as quiet as any other day. The peasants stay at home to work on their farms. They leave home only to go to market in the capital of the district on Wednesdays, and on Thursdays in the capital of the canton. Only old women and a few young girls attend Sunday mass. Boys have forsaken the catechism. The priest no longer needs a curate. His parishioners have ceased to require his services, save for the traditional rites of marriage, baptism, and burial. Except for these rites, the neighbourhood would appear non-Christian. A monument to those who lost their lives in the Great War has been erected on the principal square ; it is without any religious emblem. Naturally, pilgrimages to the Fontaine-Saint-Martin have ceased. As for Saint Apolline's Spring, its very name is forgotten. And no one now believes in sorcerers, as in my childhood.

What is the result, from the point of view of conduct, of this departure from tradition ? Morals have not deteriorated. In one direction there is marked progress. In my boyhood, many peasants went straight from mass into the public-house and came out drunk. Now drunkenness and the consequent street brawls have almost completely disappeared.

When I return to my old village and find it so changed, I inevitably recall certain words and gestures of the priests whom I used to see at the presbytery when I was ten—that is to say, after the sixteenth of May (1877) ; words and gestures which may be summed up thus : “ We are the masters, and we shall remain such.” What a defeat they have suffered !

CHAPTER II

MY CLASSICAL STUDIES

The Lower Seminary at Angers—Visit to the Benedictines at Solesmes—
The Stranger—"The Corn in the Mill."

1880-1886

IN the beginning of October, 1880, I entered the Lower Seminary of Angers, then more usually called Mongazon College, after its founder. Directed by the priests of the diocese, it received aspirants to the priesthood and to other professions.

Twenty years later I was to relate its history. I refer those who would know it in detail to that work.¹ It may be summarized thus: the directors were generally men of distinction, the professors middling, the ushers fairly good. As M. René Doumic of the French Academy says: "With middling professors and excellent ushers you may have good pupils. Supervision is the strong point of Christian education." The system needs no further explanation, since the Catholic Church has established it all over the world. In this respect Mongazon College was as good as any other. Among other notabilities it produced—or, at any rate, it did not hinder from being produced—a cardinal, Mgr. Luçon, the present Archbishop of Reims, and an academician, M. René Bazin. These are certainly not stars of the first magnitude. But in this world, which is a lottery, they have drawn lucky numbers, and their good fortune has been placed to the credit of the institution which is said to have formed them.

Unfortunately for me, at the time of my entrance it was passing through a financial and administrative crisis. For

¹ It appeared in *La Semaine Religieuse du Diocèse d'Angers* from January to November, 1900. The early years of the College are also described in my book, *Un dernier Gallican*, Henri Bernier, chanoine d'Angers.

the sake of economy one usher had been suppressed in each division. The professors discharged among them his function of supervision, although some of them were incapable of exercising it. In order to increase the income of the institution, pupils who had been expelled from other houses were admitted on condition of paying higher fees. Discipline was in any case weakened, because the food, neither "abundant" nor "varied" in accordance with the prospectus, became the cause of mutiny. Every one grumbled, and certain lay pupils took the opportunity to insult their ecclesiastical schoolmates, who equalled them in numbers, and whose fees they were paying.

Moreover, I was obviously below the standard of my class. My former tutor had advised my being put into the fourth, and I was classed accordingly. I was not good enough—I disliked the work, and found it difficult, partly because I had not been accustomed to do exercises within a time limit. I appeared destined to lag behind among the unintelligent, lazy, and embittered pupils who were at the bottom of the form. Certainly my studies began under unfavourable auspices.

The absence of supervision (that supervision "which is the strong point of Christian education") and the lack of advice as to matters of hygiene brought on a serious illness towards the middle of the school year. Returning from a walk, I took a long drink of cold water, and developed pleurisy. There was no time to send me home, so I was nursed in college. The nursing nuns and the chaplain piously endeavoured to detach me from this world by decrying its attractions and vaunting those of heaven. The sacrifice did not appear great. I made it with all my heart. And for a long while I regretted that it had not been accepted.

After that crisis, my health, which had always been bad, steadily improved. Nevertheless, a prolonged convalescence prevented my completing the school year. In the following October I returned to the fourth form. This new début was more successful. The conditions of our work also improved, and the reorganization of the system of supervision established something approaching to discipline.

Henceforth I had excellent marks. In the third form I won the second certificate for work and conduct; in the second, the second prize; in rhetoric and in philosophy, the first. Every year I rose in my form. My hard work proceeded either from a natural liking for it or from a sense of duty, but not from a desire to eclipse my schoolfellows. Never have I known a child more lacking in a sense of emulation. Instead of thinking about taking the lead in my studies, I was chiefly concerned with collecting stamps, coats of arms, and heraldic mottoes. My professors left me free to waste my time, because I never failed punctually to give in the prescribed tasks. Such neglect is the misfortune of boarders separated from their families, or whose parents are ignorant of educational matters. But where are the colleges whose professors encourage their pupils to pursue the studies they prefer?

During the vacation of 1883, between my third and second years, I accompanied a teacher who had taken a fancy to me¹ on a visit to one of his former fellow-students, Dom Léopold Gaugain, now Abbé of Ligugé.

Expelled from their abbey by reason of recent laws, the monks had been scattered here and there in the neighbourhood, in little groups not allowed to consist of more than twelve. Dom Gaugain lived in one of these little communities, established by the Duchess of Chevreuse in the manor of Chesnetz, near Sablé. There I spent some delightfully peaceful days, taking pleasant walks in the forest of Bellegarde. One evening, after the last service, a monk announced, with deep emotion: "The Count of Chambord is dead. Madame La Duchesse has just received a telegram." On the morrow the monks of Chesnetz, and I with them, went to meet all the other monks of the Abbey at a place of pilgrimage, Notre-Dame-du-Chêne, a few miles away. The monks of Solesmes there heard from their brethren of the Pretender's death. His solemn absolution was pronounced by the Superior, Dom Charles Couturier. Grief overwhelmed

¹ M. Alexandre Roger, who died priest of Briollay on June 9, 1918.

the monks and all who were present. For them the Count of Chambord was the Messiah, he who was to save Rome and France. Certain monks were so carried away that they expected a miracle. God would not fail to work one, they said, at a time when the desires of his servants seemed to be confounded.

During the following long vacation, my teacher again took me to spend a few days at Chesnetz with Dom Gaugain. During the leisure of my school year, while in the second form, I had read with delight Montalembert's *Les Moines d'Occident*, Lacordaire's life and works, and other books of Catholic Romanticism, which had turned my head and fired me with enthusiasm for the conventual life. This was the only literature available to us. We never had access to works contradicting in the slightest the ecclesiastical explanation of the universe, and still less to any which gave the scientific view of it. Our only knowledge of great thinkers and writers was derived from a few thin anthologies and from the views of popular critics¹—views with which we were gorged, and which we were to serve up to our examiners at our matriculation² examination. Hence Montalembert and Lacordaire, added to the hagiography of my early childhood,³ long remained the masters of my mind. Besides, it must be remembered that Montgazon was but a lower seminary. Though our teachers were neither fanatics nor propagandists, they were naturally inclined to urge their pupils to adopt their own way of life. When the children talked of honour, they would say, "become priests," when they spoke of ambition, "become priests," of hope, love, strength, life, "become priests."⁴

My year of rhetoric (or, as we should say, my year in the

¹ See post, chap. viii.

² *Baccalauréat*. The English examination which most nearly corresponds to the *baccalauréat* is that of matriculation. (Trans.)

³ See ante, chap. i, p. 4.

⁴ Alfred de Musset, *Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle*, chap. ii. Naturally there were degrees among our professors, and even among our chaplains, in this respect as in others. The first chaplain I knew, M. Fauchaux, strongly urged priesthood; his successor, M. Olivier, was less pronounced. Those who preached during retreat were generally eaten up with zeal.

fifth form) was crowned by two first prizes, nine seconds, and success in an examination which formed the first part of matriculation in arts.

During the following year (called the year of philosophy) I was less fortunate, for I failed in the second part of my matriculation examination. I regretted my failure merely because of the disappointment it caused my family. The first prize for work and conduct was enough for my own conscience. University parchments seemed to me useless. My visits to Chesnetz, the correspondence I had begun with Dom Gaugain, and my reading of the Romanticists, had revealed to me a world more pious and more ideal than that of the secular clergy; and into this better world I had decided to enter. Far from reconciling me to any delay, the dispersion of my Benedictine acquaintances rendered me all the more eager to join them. It surrounded them in my eyes with the halo of persecution.

My confessor assured me that such a decision would distress my mother, that my father would never consent to it, and that, even in the interest of my theological studies, it would be better for me to go first to the Higher Seminary. If I still felt called to a monastic life, I might enter it in a few years. This advice I considered myself obliged to take.

My parents wished me to make another attempt at matriculation in the following November. I obeyed. As, during the holidays, instead of studying, my mind was set on devising some way of becoming a Benedictine, and as, when October came and I entered the seminary, I thought of nothing but my vocation and sanctification, I was much less prepared for my examination in November than I had been at the close of the school year. To my second failure I was completely indifferent. Why need a monk matriculate?

This is the story of my collegiate life. That period of my youth was the first to fade from my memory. A few years after leaving Mongazon, when my former school-fellows recalled certain incidents to me, I seemed to emerge from a dream.

My short-sightedness, at that time not mitigated by spectacles, rendered me an indifferent spectator of scenes which otherwise might have aroused my curiosity, and caused me to live dreamily—drawn in upon myself. In many circles through which I was to move I was destined to remain an outsider. At the seminary, I was called a Benedictine; among the Benedictines, a Sulpician. Later, ecclesiastics were to consider me a man of the outer world. After my first dinner-party, soon after I had discarded the cassock, my host wrote to me: "You greatly interested your fellow guests, some of whom took you at first for a professor of some foreign university."¹ Nowhere, however, was I more of a foreigner than at college. The praise of college as the happiest time of one's life left me profoundly incredulous. Mongazon seemed to me nothing but a tolerable hotel, where I had made a few agreeable acquaintances, but where, as in most caravanserais, the majority were commonplace and colourless. From such a judgment I do not except the professors. Save for a few, they were good fellows; two or three were even excellent. Nevertheless, and unjustly without a doubt—for I took no account of the extenuating circumstance of their lack of training in the art of education—I have long owed them a grudge for the absence of interest, or even (to speak frankly) the dullness, of their classes in general. Although devoid of emulation, I had a curious mind, an eager desire to learn.

The crying fault of ecclesiastical education is the cultivation of memory at the expense of intelligence, the exaltation of authority at the expense of reason, of obedience at the expense of a sense of responsibility. Discipline, outward conformity to rules, is held to be more important than the development of character and the acquisition of knowledge. Under the high-sounding name of tradition, prejudice and routine are inculcated. The products of such a régime, instead of being citizens ready to cope with modern life, are fit only to become subjects of a Roman type of imperialism.

¹ Letter of June 22, 1912.

One of my good teachers¹ compared pupils to grains of wheat crushed in the mill. I can think of no more apt simile. The priests of the Low Seminary ground "the flour of men" which the priests of the High Seminary were to bake in their mould.

Nevertheless, Catholicism represents a grand idea of universality and continuity; the obedience it extols is an excellent school of loving-kindness and self-sacrifice; it sets up the great Christian ideal: "Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect."² In order to attain an end one must aim higher still. If one would make men, must one not aim at making heroes and saints? "Man is only great in proportion to his dreams. He creates his ideal; but in return it is the ideal that creates the man."³

My susceptible nature was so pounded and moulded by the Catholic system that I resolved to consecrate myself to the Church by the most complete self-sacrifice—that of taking monastic vows.

¹ M. Célestin Verdier, my professor of philosophy, later head of the St. Louis College at Saumur. In *La Revue des Facultés catholiques de l'Ouest* (October, 1893, p. 109) he wrote: "Ought not pupils to be saved from contact with crabbed, capricious, ill-controlled, bizarre, and melancholy professors? Youth, like flowers, should blossom in an atmosphere of freshness. And, frankly, can a gathering of professors be said to suggest the freshest and the most charming season of the year? How many are the professors who after a few years begin their classes like a mill-wheel with its accustomed ticking! Like the corn that is ground by the mill, it is the pupils only that are changed and renewed." Those "crabbed, capricious, bizarre, and melancholy professors" I, as well as M. Verdier, knew at Mongazon, both when I was pupil and when I was professor.

² The Gospel of St. Matthew, v, 48.

³ François Roussel-Despierre, *Hors du Scepticisme*, p. 243.

CHAPTER III

MY PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

The High Seminary at Angers—The Sulpicians—My Confessor—The House of Philosophy—The Professors.

1886–1887

THE Catholic clergy are trained intellectually and morally in strictly secluded residential institutions, known as seminaries. In the lower seminaries the future Levite is educated in the classics. In certain countries—France, for example—Rome does not forbid the admission of lay pupils to these institutions. But Rome does not favour this system, for fear lest lay pupils should corrupt their clerical classmates with ideas of the day. In the high seminaries Rome is less tolerant. Theological students have no contact with those studying for other professions. Lectures are given in the institution, which is a kind of monastery closed to the outer world. While engaging in professional studies, candidates for the priesthood, with the aid of their confessors, carefully consider the question of their vocation.

Their programme of studies comprises two periods, the length of which varies according to the diocese: one is devoted to philosophy, the other to theology. In the Angers diocese at that time, one year was the period for philosophy, three for theology. The teachers were priests belonging to the society which then controlled the seminary of St. Sulpice at Paris.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Angers seminary¹

¹ On the history of this institution consult the following work: G. Letourneau, *Histoire du séminaire d'Angers depuis son union avec Saint Sulpice en 1695 jusqu'à nos jours* (Angers, 1895, in 8°). A further description of it may be found in the first chapter of *Les années d'apprentissage*, de Sylvain Briollet (Paris, Bloud, 1921), by M. Maurice Brillant.

was established in the fine Abbey of Saint Serge. As there were more students than could be housed in the monastic buildings, the Sulpicians had erected near by a kind of barracks, which was the residence of students in philosophy. This was the house which I entered on October 1, 1886, with some forty youths of my own age, fresh from the various ecclesiastical establishments of the diocese.

The house was clean. Its interior, painted yellow, was totally unattractive. That mattered little to me. My religious enthusiasm would have made me contented with the darkest of prisons. A week after my arrival I put on ecclesiastical clothes.

I will not dilate on seminary life in general, nor on the life of a Sulpician seminarist in particular. An abundant literature on the subject¹ exists for the information of those who wish to consult it.

In Renan's *Souvenirs de Jeunesse*, pages which have become famous are devoted to the seminary of Saint Sulpice. As I have said elsewhere,² this celebrated writer "illuminated with the charming colours of his fancy a *milieu* which was in itself dull and devoid of ideas." Moreover, time has changed the company of Saint Sulpice as it changes everything: Renan's Sulpicians were half Gallican; mine were Ultramontane. Renan's were still true to the old rule of the society "to publish nothing save beneath the veil of anonymity, and always to write in the most impersonal and colourless style." In my day Sulpicians signed their books. The most prolific, Fulcran Vigouroux, was so enamoured of current literary fashion as to add to his signature the name

¹ Cf. G. Letourneau, *Nouveau manuel du séminariste, Directoire de piété à l'usage des clercs des grands séminaires* (Paris, 1907, in-16). The author was one of my professors and confessors at the seminary. His work therefore contains an *exposé* of the principles and methods underlying and directing my training as a priest. Certain ideas on this subject were peculiar to Sulpicians. In their defence M. Letourneau published on May 1, 1910, *Observations sur une nouvelle théorie de la vocation sacerdotale*, an article which was condemned indirectly by a letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State to the Bishop of Aire and Dax, approving of the works of Canon Lahitton, an opponent of M. Letourneau.

² *Le Père Hyacinthe dans l'Eglise romaine*, chap. ii. I have had further opportunities of referring to Sulpician seminaries in my article on Marcel Hébert, and in my *Evêques et diocèses* (under the diocese of Clermont).

of the place where he was said to have written his precious pages—Nant d'Aveyron. The community's most persistent feature is credulity. Could it be otherwise in a society in which religious life, both traditional and actual, is that of Loretto? Finally, to complete the comparison between the Saint Sulpice of Paris which Renan described and the provincial house through which I passed, it must not be forgotten that the Parisian house had always more distinction—or shall we say less mediocrity?—than any of the other houses of the society. The Superiors kept the best professors for Paris. Their provincial institutions were not so well staffed.

A worn-out old man of seventy, M. Houbart, presided over that of Angers. On my first day I chose him for my confessor. I had been advised to do so. A younger man would have been better for me. The head of the philosophy house, M. Letourneau,¹ may, perhaps, have realized this. He overwhelmed me with kindness, hoping to bring me under his spiritual influence. I frequently asked his advice; but for all that I did not forsake M. Houbart. I liked his large heart and his perfect loyalty. When I confided to him my failure to find satisfaction in scholasticism, and how unconvincing seemed to me certain arguments in my text-book,² he would more than agree with me and would himself call some thesis in question. For him all philosophy resided in the traditionalism of Augustin Bonetty. But my aspirations did not urge me in that direction. My worthy professor profoundly despised anything which purported to be a conclusion of history or natural science. "History," he often said, "is a sibyl which may be made to say anything you like. The science of to-day is the fallacy of to-morrow; the science of yesterday the fallacy of to-day. Nothing is true save the scriptures and the definitions of the Church. They alone are worth

¹ At present priest of Saint Sulpice. For his biography and his work in the Angers Seminary see an article by Canon Grimault in *La Semaine religieuse* of the diocese, February 14, 1900.

² That of the Sulpician P. Vallet, Professor of Philosophy at the Issy Seminary: *Praelectiones philosophicae, ad mentem sancti Thomae in Sancti Sulpitii seminario habitae*. It appears that Leo XIII praised this book's accuracy, its excellent arrangement, and its comprehensiveness (Mourret, *l'Eglise contemporaine*, II, p. 380).

studying." To these studies M. Houbart had devoted his life. Consequently he was regarded as an excellent theologian and a good Hebrew scholar.

When I submitted to him the rule of life I had drawn up for myself—according to the custom of the house, and notwithstanding that we had a general rule which was fairly minute—I might have seen at once his scorn for the profane knowledge which my spiritual backwardness caused me to regard as a useful accessory. In my time-table I had reserved some time for drawing in order to keep myself in practice. I was fond of it, and had succeeded so far as to have a little landscape exhibited that year at the Western Academy's Exhibition of Fine Arts.¹ I also expressed a wish to read in English from time to time the *Imitation of Jesus* and the religious works of F. W. Faber, in order not to forget the language. "Art," he replied, "is full of snares for youth. If you should ever be appointed professor of drawing, you can always learn it again. It will soon be done. As for English, it is useless for a priest unless, my good friend, he wishes to be a missionary." Not having fathomed the complete detachment which inspired these decisions, some time afterwards I asked my confessor's permission to study the first principles of ecclesiastical architecture. He laughed and said: "When you have to restore your church call in an architect. Nevertheless, if you want to study these fusty old things, do so in your long holidays.² But you would be better employed reading Massillon. He is the model for preachers."

Wishing to be obedient in all things, I conformed to these injunctions. Thus I completely forgot how to draw; and thus there began in me an operation—a castration of the intellect—from which I have never entirely recovered. Gifted with a curious mind and eagerly desiring knowledge, I often had to hear that there existed branches of learning which

¹ See the pamphlet *Académie de l'Ouest. Exposition annuelle des Beaux-Arts. Catalogue des œuvres exposées dans la salle des fêtes de l'Hôtel de Ville d'Angers en 1886.*

² In the spring we had one day a week to ourselves; we spent it at the country house of the seminary: these were our long holidays.

would be useless or even injurious to the priest, to the monk that I wished to become.

In order to be the good seminarist that I desired to be in the eyes of my confessor, I had to apply myself exclusively to the programme of studies prescribed by the seminary : philosophy, scripture, ecclesiastical history. No small matter !

Morning and evening two professors, in two lessons of an hour each, explained our text-book of philosophy and made us repeat it.

The first was M. Ollive,¹ a very obliging man and of almost unflinching good temper. A few years after I had myself begun to teach, he told me that, of all the Sulpicians then professors, he was the oldest professor of philosophy, and that the longer he taught philosophy the less he believed in it. Had he much belief in it when I was his pupil ? Had he any more faith in reason than the good M. Houbart ? At any rate, he forced himself to inculcate in us the scholasticism of the manual by diluting, generally in Latin, the text of the author, weak already. He hardly ever spoke in French except to relate anecdotes to kill time, or to argue more effectually against the Cartesian spirit, which inspired, so he said, the questions we ventured to ask. During our last college year we had, indeed, learnt a university system of philosophy, in contrast with which neo-scholasticism seemed unable to hold its own. During that very year, those who had preceded us in class had bombarded the professor with protests, and had so overwhelmed him that one day he burst into tears. He was jeered at. The Superiors accused the pupils of being perverted by systematic doubt. To argue against a professor was a sign of a bad collegiate spirit ; no exception must be taken to the teaching of the seminary ; recalcitrants showed themselves to be without vocation, "discretion and humility of mind being essential qualities in a theological student," according to that rascal Stendhal.² We benefited by the experience of our predecessors. With the exception of a few

¹ Professor at the Angers Seminary from 1880 to 1898 ; later, from 1902 till 1922, head of La Maison des Carmes, a kind of university seminary subordinate to the Catholic Institute at Paris.

² *Le Rouge et le Noir*, chap. xvii.

naïve students, of whom I was one, our class refrained from asking for explanations. Nevertheless, M. Ollive forced us to listen to long sermons against so-called Cartesianism.

Our evening professor, M. Baron,¹ abstained from denouncing Descartes, and plainly lacked enthusiasm for the scholastic doctrine and method. His favourite philosopher was Alfred Fouillée. When he was not suffering from indigestion (his weak point), and when his opinions did not too openly contradict the propositions we had to accept, he gave us, in French, an extremely interesting lesson. In the absence of either of these conditions, a frequent occurrence, he would strictly observe the rule; the whole lesson would be in Latin, and we had to recite the text-book. Such was my initiation into what was called "Christian philosophy," but which I was content to describe as "neo-scholasticism." I did not appreciate a system in which everything seemed to depend on definitions which we were forbidden to inquire into and which seemed to me to contain precisely that which it was necessary to prove.² Nevertheless, my education being what it was, I could not but accept certain philosophical dogmas. If theology did not seem to me to suppress reason altogether, at least I held that revelation ought in all cases to furnish reason with definite guidance. Therefore doubts as to the teaching I was receiving were sometimes rejected as a temptation. I was delighted to hear M. Houbart, when I submitted them to him, laughingly call scholasticism *verba et voces*. This excellent old man endeavoured to console me by dismissing my scruples as fanciful and illusory fears. M. Letourneau took them more seriously. At length I came

¹ M. Félix-Marie Baron, born at Getigné (Loire Inférieure) on October 27, 1854, ordained priest in 1880, appointed professor in the Angers Seminary in 1885. In 1908 he became chaplain to the Dominican Sisters of the third order (sick nurses) at Loudun.

² In a letter (March 19, 1886) from M. Mignot (who died Archbishop of Albi) to Marcel Hébert I found a criticism of this system which harmonizes completely with my own recollections. "How right you were to see nothing but words in scholastic metaphysics! They are *apriorists*, as Father Brugère would have said. They invent a complete definition, then they come to believe in its objective truth, and consequently reason as if they had proved the thing, rather like Tartarin de Tarascon, if the comparison were not indecorous, who ended by believing in everything he had invented."

to say to myself: "Why should I worry? During this century Sulpicians have in this very chair taught in succession Cartesianism, the Scotch philosophy, traditionalism, ontologism. Now it is medieval philosophy that is presented, for the sole reason, so it is said, that Leo XIII commands it. That also may change. Meanwhile my professor of philosophy at Mongazon and several other priests, whom I know, are not called heretics merely because they do not embrace scholasticism." Disappointed in the realm of philosophy, I might quite well have concentrated on the classes of scripture and ecclesiastical history, but I found these also unscientific.

If the professor of Scripture, the ineffable M. Achet,¹ might be taken as representing the virtues of the old Sulpicians, he was also a quaint agglomeration of all the oddities. True, he had the fine head of an old priest—clear, laughing eyes, fresh-coloured cheeks, and a halo of white hair. Unfortunately, when he opened his smiling mouth he stammered funnily and sputtered out his puns. In his serious moments he told tales of ghosts and devilments. His judgment was as antiquated and puerile as his face was wrinkled and childish. His classes would have enlivened the strictest prison. The Very Reverend Father Hébert tells that in his High Seminary he had seen carved on one of the schoolroom forms: "It is here that lessons are given on exegesis, here every one laughs, talks, and learns only what pleases him."²

¹ Born at Bourges in 1826, appointed professor at the Angers Seminary in 1860. He was correctly described as "ineffable" by the dean of the chapter of Angers, M. Eugène Grimault, who has published two volumes of interesting *Souvenirs* (Angers, Grassin, 1907, 1910). They contain fine portraits of several Sulpicians referred to here—MM. Houbart, Achet, Schwarz, Ruchaud, and Laroche. Although I refer the reader to this book, which he will find interesting, I warn those who would use the *Souvenirs* and articles of M. Grimault not always to rely upon him. He was no disbeliever in pious lying, as the following anecdote proves. I had it from M. Ledoyen, Superior of Mongazon and of the community of Les Dames de la Retraite of Angers. In *La Semaine Religieuse* M. Grimault described the ceremony of taking the vows at the Retreat with details which were touching but inaccurate. "Who was your authority?" asked M. Ledoyen. "It was not like that." And he made a point of telling him exactly what occurred. M. Grimault interrupted him, laughing: "I know it all, but one must edify people." M. Ledoyen, who himself was no very scrupulous historian, was astonished, and he told me of this conversation. It must have taken place between 1891 and 1897.

² Hébert, *Sous le Joug des Césars* (1924), p. 134.

That inscription might well have been engraved in M. Achet's class-room. Nothing could have been simpler than his method of teaching. The lesson for the day was recited from Fulcran Vigouroux's *Biblical Text-Book*. Then the Professor explained the following lesson. This consisted, first in putting into parentheses those novel or too advanced interpretations which the author had felt called upon to indicate. It was only sound and time-honoured doctrine that we were to learn. After this preliminary work, and in spite of our wild laughter, the Professor imperturbably made us take our text-books and mark with a b-big A, a b-big B, a b-big C each of the main arguments in favour of generally received doctrines, and with a s-small a, a s-small b, and a s-small c the minor arguments, and so on all through the thesis. Twelve years elapsed, and the results of this system of nomenclature had then barely dawned on my consciousness.

The course of lectures on ecclesiastical history which we attended in the theology house was nothing but a series of apologetics bringing into constant relief the triumphal glory of the Roman Church down the ages. Further description is unnecessary, seeing that our Professor, M. Marion,¹ had his note-books printed twenty years later. Those who wish to know the cast of his mind may refer to the first edition of his work²—I say the first, for the criticism of the first edition caused him to make certain alterations in those that followed. But this first edition fails to represent the lectures as I heard them. At that time the worthy professor had himself hardly begun to understand what he was teaching.

Our Sulpicians called the lectures on ecclesiastical history

¹ Born in the diocese of Rodez in 1853, died in 1919; was Head of the School of Theology at Aubenas.

² *Histoire de l'Eglise*, by M. Léon Marion; first edition, 1905, Paris, librairie Roger et Chernoviz. In its issue of February 10, 1909, *La Croix* thus criticized this History: "This work has been accused not without reason of a certain lack of order, of frequent repetition, of considerable inaccuracy, especially in the ancient history of the Church; of an unprofessional manner in its bibliographical references, and of too apparent an absence of that serene impartiality required by such a subject. These faults have, unfortunately, not disappeared in the successive editions of the book." Nevertheless, *La Vigie, Organe du Catholicisme Intégral* (February 6, 1913), detects a certain liberalism in the book.

and scripture "minor lectures," considering them subsidiary. In the double examinations, which closed each half of the academic year, only an insignificant number of marks was assigned to these subjects. Nevertheless they were considered to constitute the foundation of a religion said to be revealed. But an unerring feeling for conservatism brought home to our Catholic professors the realization that the conclusions from the Scriptures and Sacred History do not naturally tend to orthodoxy, and that in order to inculcate young Levites with sound doctrine it is better to begin with philosophy. Philosophy, accordingly, constituted the main part of the teaching, and everything was so arranged as to give it predominance. Moreover, the works of modern philosophers (with the exception of the neo-scholastics) were inaccessible to us, and we knew them merely through the quotations and refutations of the orthodox.

Our masters believed they could impose a check upon our work by "conferences" and "colloquies." The pompous title of "conference" was given to a kind of mutual education class, held almost daily, in which four seminarists, who had won the highest marks, each repeated the lesson of the day to about ten of his fellow pupils. The colloquy was a solemn joust, which took place once a week in the presence of the whole house of philosophy : two champions, armed with Latin syllogisms, contended with one another on some recently studied subject. The teaching was, as you will see, almost entirely oral. During the entire academic year I think we produced hardly more than four or five pieces of written work. It was to our memories especially that the teaching was addressed. Pupils who were docile and devoid of any intellectual curiosity, but capable of repeating without hesitation the curious propositions of our text-book, easily passed muster in our master's opinion as possessing minds both sound and excellent. Pupils who were incapable of attaining in examination a certain minimum of marks, which was very low, were dismissed, no matter how great their piety, and sent to other seminaries in need of students. "Piety goes ; stupidity remains," said an old Sulpician. Strange

words ! Do they not indicate in the work of the seminary something which experience of life gradually dispels ?

Besides intellectual instruction, devotional instruction was imparted to us every evening in a lecture called "a spiritual reading," in which M. Letourneau instructed us more especially in the art of prayer.¹ The devotional side of Sulpician life seemed to me too much regulated and systematized. Even pious exercises were subjected to rule. Thus, from our return after the long vacation until the Easter Festival, the first year's seminarists, whatever their fervour or their desire, were allowed to communicate only on Sundays.

Another curious recollection is that of our hysterical laughter. Often at dinner, while grace was being said, or at evening prayers, but more especially during a certain religious exercise called "self-examination," when it was the custom to read to us a book of M. Tronson's in antiquated binding, one of us would be seized with an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which would infect the others, sometimes even the solemn directors themselves. In vain, at those times, in order to avoid succumbing to the contagion, did one resort to much-vaunted devices—to fixing one's mind, for example, on the passion of Our Lord : the nervous paroxysm nearly always prevailed. Possibly this phenomenon may have contributed to the following definition : *Novitius, animal ridens et risibile*. In any case, these outbursts occur in all large houses of novices. Like electric discharges, they relieve repressed emotions. Some indulged in them as a distraction. Our masters treated them with great leniency.

In reality the seminary régime is more or less of a disappointment for almost all those who submit to it. But they regard all its imperfections as divinely ordained trials sent them by Providence, and they persevere. Beyond the seminary they see the Church ; beyond the Church, God and

¹ See M. Letourneau's own work, *La Méthode d'Oraison Mentale du Séminaire Saint-Sulpice, Rédactions et Explications Primitives—Documents Divers*. Paris, 1903, in-12.

the ideal the Church sets forth. Of the forty-six candidates for the priesthood in my class, only ten renounced the ecclesiastical profession after giving it a more or less lengthy trial, and before becoming sub-deacons ; three died in the seminary, five entered religious orders. The others remained diocesan priests ; but among them two to my knowledge became secular clergy, after having been in the ministry for several years.

Although I constantly forced myself, according to the advice given me, to disregard my own judgment and to accept as the word of God what my directors said, I could not forget my aspirations, nor could I shut my eyes to certain facts. In short, I was at the seminary because I had not dared to go straight to the Benedictines. Consequently, whenever I saw or heard something that was not quite right I would say : " At Solesmes it would be different ; Dom Gaugain told me they did not think like that." This pious comparison seemed to render my critical remarks lawful. In this way, my small amount of common sense survived the prodigies of auto-suggestion which I was then achieving in order to be edified by everything—prodigies which ought to have ended by completely stupefying me or converting me into a fanatic.

The idea of becoming a Benedictine haunted me, although my confessor constantly told me there was no need for haste. I had formed the plan of spending the following holidays in the monastery of Silos, in Spain, where Dom Gaugain had taken up his abode—a little journey from which I might very well not have returned. The project, pondered over with delight, was never carried out ; but events were none the less surely leading to my entrance into the noviciate.

I spent the beginning of my holidays at Clermont-Créans, with my maternal grandmother (my grandfather had died during the previous winter), who was delighted by my entering the Church. The priest, a jolly fellow and very lazy, determined to give me a good time. He took me to all the neighbouring presbyteries. To my exalted fervour these village priests seemed like fortune-tellers and sellers of masses.

Their jokes, often very innocent, shocked me. There lies too wide a gulf between the overheated atmosphere of the seminary and the coldness of the ordinary parish. My impressionable temperament was struck by it. In a letter of the future Cardinal Amette I have discovered that his experience resembled mine. While spending his last holiday as a seminarist in the diocese of Evreux, he wrote : " I receive so painful an impression whenever circumstances bring me face to face with the actualities of a ministry which will be mine in six months. It is as if a leaden atmosphere suddenly enveloped me and stifled my soul. Everything appears so vulgar, so dull, and so cold in the lives of the faithful and of the priests in this neighbourhood. Alas ! they seem totally devoid of ardour, of enthusiasm, of noble visions."¹

On July 11, I was present at the last day of the triduum celebrated at Solesmes in order to commemorate the half-centenary of the restoration of the Order in France. The splendour of the ceremony entranced me.² The Bishop of Angers, Mgr. Freppel, extolled the rôle of the congregation in a panegyric the hyperboles of which I in my simplicity interpreted literally. On my return to Clermont the contrast between the poor secular clergy and the magnificent ideal which had just been revealed to me could not fail to accentuate my exaltation. Without telling my family, on September 7, I went to Solesmes for a retreat. My confessor was the Abbé Dom Couturier. On the 12th, a little before noon, he announced to me that the will of God was made manifest in me, and that I must accomplish it without delay. I had resolved to do so.

I returned to ask my parents' permission to become a Benedictine. My mother, although grieved at the thought of our separation, believed that I was choosing the better part. My father, who had already made a great sacrifice in letting me enter the seminary, now fell into deep despair, and at first withheld his consent. But he was so kind and so

¹ Letter from Adolphe Amette to Marcel Hébert from Beaumesnil, July 9, 1873.

² For this festival see my book, *Dom Couturier*, pp. 239-45.

respectful of the conscience of others that he soon withdrew his opposition. M. Houbart, on his part, told me that, if for any reason my monastic adventure were not a success, he would take me back with pleasure. I set out for my noviciate perfectly happy.

CHAPTER IV

SOLESMES

I Become a Benedictine—A Divided Congregation : The Seniors and the Juniors—My Dismissal—The Advantages and the Dangers of the Training at Solesmes.

1887–1888

ON the left bank of the Sarthe, about six leagues from La Flèche, the town of my birth, and about a dozen from Angers, the town of my education, is situated the little village of Solesmes. In the course of centuries it has grown up round the ancient Benedictine priory built upon a rock which dominates this lovely valley. On the right bank most of the horizon is closed in by a line of abrupt cliffs clothed with verdure, while on the left pleasant meadows slope gently towards the river. A little lower down the stream may be seen the pretty little town of Sablé, its fine château and imposing viaduct. It is one of the most restful landscapes imaginable.

The priory, suppressed at the Revolution, was reopened in 1833, and promoted to the rank of abbey in 1837. Its restorer, Dom Prosper Guéranger, was not content to reconstitute a community of men. Near the abbey dedicated to St. Peter he founded a convent, dedicated to St. Cecilia. In 1880, these two houses refused to demand the authorization necessary for their legal existence. The government expelled the monks, but did not venture to treat the nuns with such severity. Thus scattered, the monks, as I have said,¹ formed themselves into small communities established in the châteaux of the neighbourhood. Then they rented or bought houses in the village, and returned to inhabit them. Little by little they reorganized their conventual life. In 1887 they even

¹ See *ante*, chap. ii, p. 11 ; and for greater detail *Dom Couturier*.

began to take their meals in the same refectory. The abbey church being under seal, they held their services in the parish church, and on great festivals in the church of St. Cecilia. Thus the village was turned into a monastery. Monks were seen crossing the streets on their way to the parish church, the refectory, the printing-press, the libraries, and the house of the Abbot, who lived in the middle of the village, opposite the abbey gate. Such was the general appearance of Solesmes when I entered upon my noviciate.

The retreat, during which my vocation had been decided, had begun on September 8, the day of the Virgin's Nativity, once a great festival in my province, where it was called "Our Lady of Anjou." I returned on the 24th, the Festival of Our Lady of Mercy. In mystic circles dates are not without importance. These dates were considered a good recommendation for me.

According to the custom of the congregation, the candidate had to stay in the abbey hostelry for several days before being admitted to the noviciate. This prescribed interval was in accordance with the rule and tradition of the order, which was that entrance into the monastery involved some difficulty. But, as the monks could no longer use their hostelry, which was within the abbey precincts, and as I must needs have stayed in the village inn, this symbolical waiting time was dispensed with in my case, and I entered on my noviciate the day after my arrival.

According to the laws of the Church, the novices in every congregation are grouped into a little community separate from the religious who have taken their vows.¹ Among the Benedictines this group comprised three categories :—

(1) The postulants. They wore the habit of the order, but not the cowl of distinctive shape which indicated the novice, though they engaged in the same religious exercises throughout their first probation, which lasted from six to fourteen months.

¹ I have commented on these laws in my *Vie du Père Hyacinthe*, chap. iv.

(2) The novices properly so-called. They passed through a canonical probation of a year, after which they took the vows.

(3) Those who had made their profession,¹ but who continued in their noviciate for two years after having taken the vows.

Novices and postulants were called "brethren"; those who had made their profession "fathers"; and, if they were priests, "Dom." Thus, during my noviciate I was associated with six fathers² and eight novices.³ Five candidates⁴ entered after me in the following year.

All my reverend associates were my seniors. Some of them, by renouncing the world, had sacrificed both position and fortune. Several novices and postulants were priests. But most of them returned to their dioceses. They were neither young enough nor pliant enough to adapt themselves to the régime. The master of the novices, Dom Logerot, preferred having men to be trained to receiving them trained already. "Brother Houtin," he said to me, "you are fortunate in having worn your cassock no longer than a year. Something may be made of you. Had you worn it longer, there would have been no hope. A priest who wishes to turn monk cannot possibly; he always remains a parish priest, with a hood on his back."

Intercourse among novices was limited to two periods of

¹ The French word *profès*, though in use in English in the Middle Ages, is now obsolete. (Trans.)

² Their names were: † Dom Omer Graux, † Dom Mellet, † Father Pierre Butruille, Father Joseph Lambert, Father Paul Renaudin (who became Abbot of Saint-Maurice de Clervaux, Luxembourg), and Father Gaston Démaret. Those whose names are marked by a cross are dead.

³ The Brethren: Jacques Chaumet, † Jean-Baptiste du Coëtlosquet, * Pierre Leurent, Jules Olivieri, Maximilien Butruille, * Emile Lambert (priest of the diocese of Evreux), Paul Flinois, and * Hérissé (priest of the diocese of Le Mans). Those whose names are marked by an asterisk did not take the vows.

⁴ The Brethren: Louis Froment (took his vows in the Cistercian monastery at Acey), * Jules Charrier (priest of the diocese of Nevers), * François Provost (priest of the diocese of Vannes), Paul Chauvin (took his vows in the Abbey of Ligugé), and † Antoine Delpech. I do not like to give my opinion of the living; but can I be accused of indiscretion if I add that the dead (the Fathers Graux, Mellet, Pierre Butruille, du Coëtlosquet, and Delpech) were richly endowed with every virtue?

recreation daily (one lasted an hour, after the mid-day meal ; the other half an hour, after the evening meal) and to one three hours' walk a week. With these exceptions, we were forbidden to speak to one another unless for some useful or charitable purpose—a rule which was very broadly interpreted.

To one thing only can my happiness during the early months of my noviciate be compared : it was the happiness of a young man who, after a thousand hindrances, at length possesses his beloved. Mine was a veritable honeymoon, the full flower of love. I was twenty.¹

I was plunged in holy delight. In the morning, after serving mass, I indulged in endless actions of grace. As the day went on my ecstasy did not diminish. And in the evening on my visit to the Holy Sacrament, or in my almost daily Stations of the Cross, I continued in the same exalted mood.

The study of my breviary—my only occupation when I was not engaged in prayer—helped me to understand our long and beautiful services. They lasted from four to seven hours a day, and afforded perpetual food for my piety. Psalms, Bible stories, lessons from the writings of the Fathers, and the glorious ritual produced in me a kind of intoxication. What can I say of the church festivals? On those days the services (of an incomparable perfection) were held, not in the confined choir of the parish church, but in the church of the Benedictines.²

My beautiful mystic dreams had lasted for seven months, when I was rudely awakened one Thursday, April 12, 1888. The affair was so decisive, and it throws so strange a light on the history of the community of Solesmes, that it must be related in detail.

After the dissolution of 1888, the institution of the novices had been provisionally installed in the neighbouring village of Pincé, in a manor belonging to the Countess of Tertu. When

¹ As a psychologist observes, this age is "the flowering time for religion as for most things in human life. It is not the fruit-bearing time ; that comes later." Pratt, *Religious Consciousness*, p. 108.

² I have attempted to describe this perfection in my *Dom Couturier*, pp. 162-3.

this noble dame died in 1887 the monks desired to show their gratitude for this hospitality. In 1888, on April 12, the anniversary of her death, our Father Abbot wished to be present at her memorial service; and, in order that it should be held with great pomp, he took with him all the novices of that time, and, in addition, four monks who had served their noviciate at Pincé in 1880-1. We made the journey on foot. It was a delightful excursion.

On the way home one of the former novices of Pincé, Dom Bernard * * *¹ took me with him, and we conversed by the way. Wishing to give me timely counsel, he did not hesitate to reveal to me, in its naked reality, a situation which I had not in the least suspected.

"The community," he said, "is divided into two parties, 'the old' and 'the young'; or, in other words, 'the Cecilians' and 'the anti-Cecilians.' The first—nearly all associates of Dom Gúeranger, whom they very much annoyed—are haunted by memories of the community of Saint Maur, and write books. You in your noviciate are no longer advised to do so—God be thanked. Another spirit is now abroad. We have returned to the true tradition of our Order—the contemplative life and personal holiness." He then expounded these ideas and facts to me at length, giving the names of the chief representatives of both factions in the monasteries of the Order. The reformation of the noviciate was the work of Dom Logerot, the chief of "the young" and the confessor of the Abbess of Sainte-Cécile. Nearly all the monks who had been trained since 1879—that is, since Dom Logerot had been master of the novices—were loyal to the new teaching. And my charitable adviser related with verve the vexations of "the old" and the thousand annoyances which "the young" inflicted on them.

In the evening I was a prey to sad reflections. Did all this fine exterior which had so powerfully allured me hide bitter rivalry and hatred leading to petty vexations and

¹ Having entered Solesmes as a young layman, Dom Bernard * * * took the vows on December 8, 1881. He has lived in the Abbeys of Solesmes, Marseilles, Saint-Maur-sur-Loire, and Clervaux.

persecutions such as laymen with no religion would hardly indulge in? Even advanced age afforded no protection. These aged monks, whose white hair or baldness should have inspired veneration, were ridiculed throughout recreation, and were perpetually beset by the raillery of their impertinent companions. And, after all, my own ideal inclined to be that of "the old." I had been attracted to Solesmes by the reputation of the learned Benedictines, and by the brilliant picture of the services they had rendered to the West, of which I had read in Montalembert.

I aimed at sanctification, it is true, but I also desired to work. It was not my intention to write books; though I did not see why, if need arose, I should not be able to write them, nor why I should abstain from doing so.

Dom Bernard had dragged me from the highest heaven down to earth. Soon afterwards I had another revelation, which showed me even more of what was going on around me. A priest,¹ who was a friend of my grandmother, who had known me as a child, and who was intimate with one of the old monks, came to see me in the parlour. In course of conversation, he confided to me sadly that I was unfortunate in having entered a disunited community, and one in which divergence of opinion was complicated by personal rivalries which augured badly for the future. The Father Abbot, who belonged to the party of "the old," was seventy-one. His successor would probably be one of "the young"; and this faction, greedy of power, was itself divided between two candidates, Dom Logerot and Dom Delatte. The chances of the second, who had recently taken the vows, would increase with the years of Dom Couturier. But if the Abbot died soon there would be, according to "the young," no choice save that of Dom Logerot. He was intriguing, and was trying to win votes by sending to other houses those on whose support he thought he could not depend.

These new confidences distressed me all the more because they were, without doubt, corroborated by certain of my own

¹ The Abbé Lucas, former curate of Clermont, then vicar of Ligron, and later of Neuvillalais. He died in 1918, at the house of one of his former pupils.

observations, the true meaning of which had hitherto escaped me. I loved Solesmes with all my heart, and I had no one to whom I could confide my distress. My master would have been hurt had I expressed a wish to change my confessor. And I could not without his knowledge ask for a special confessor, nor talk confidentially with another monk, except with the Father Abbot. But how could I confide to this excellent old man revelations which would have grieved him?¹

The observations I now began to make completely destroyed my happiness. Despair, doubt, aridity of soul, beset me. For years I kept the little pocket-book in which I recorded all this daily. These notes bore witness to such terrible conflicts, to such whimsical and such horrible self-torture, that I destroyed them in a fit of disgust. My efforts at auto-suggestion were such that I resolved not to betray my vocation, but to remain in the place to which God had led me.

The life at Solesmes pleased me. It is an adaptation of the rule of St. Benedict to modern temperaments—a very modified application, preserving as its chief characteristic zeal in divine service.² On the other hand, Dom Couturier, a true disciple of Saint Benedict (as I believe I have shown in my little book about him), endeavoured to maintain the traditional character of the Order. As to the rule, it was observed as far as circumstances permitted—that is to say, as far as was possible by monks scattered through the village and using a church which did not belong to them, since it was the parish church. The Solesmes which I knew was, therefore, somewhat abnormal.

We rose at four o'clock. The first offices (matins, lauds,

¹ I learned later that Dom Couturier was not ignorant of the situation, that it distressed him greatly, and that he died in anguish at the thought of what would happen in the community after his death.

² A good exposition of the religious and moral idea underlying the Benedictine rule as observed at Solesmes may be found in *Commentaires sur la Règle de Saint Benoît* (in 8°, vii, 569 pp.; Paris, Plon Nourrit, 1913), by the third Abbot of Solesmes, Dom Delatte. He has made great use of the notes left by his two predecessors and by several other "old" members of the community.

and prime) were at half-past four. There followed low mass, served by the members of the community who were not priests. Conventual mass was at nine, preceded by terce and followed by sext. At half-past five, nones were sung and vespers and complines. After this last a lecture on some religious subject was given in the chapter-house.

On all but fast days one might have an early breakfast, about half-past seven or eight, taken standing. At noon we had our principal meal, consisting of soup, two dishes, and desert. The evening meal, which was lighter, took place at seven. Two periods of recreation—one of an hour, the other of three-quarters of an hour¹—followed these repasts. We were supposed to go to bed at nine, but most of us had permission to sit up in our cells.

The cooking and appointments in those humble village dwellings were not good, and our habit—the traditional black frock and hooded scapulary—was of inferior quality. Not only did our circumstances render economy necessary, but the Father Abbot held very strong views as to monastic poverty. Under his patriarchal rule, material life was harder than under his predecessor, and infinitely harder than under his successor. Such as it was, it did not in any way alarm me, not even by the thought of spending my whole life confined within four walls.

According to the Solesmes rule, a postulant must ask to begin his canonical noviciate after a year's probation. If the Abbot were completely satisfied with one, he did not wait for the lapse of a year before himself making proposals. If, on the contrary, the person did not altogether please him, he would postpone remonstrances until the time came for the candidate to make the demand.

Nine, ten, eleven months went by without Dom Logerot giving the slightest sign that he was about to broach the subject. Ought I formally to solicit admission into a congregation the rule and the constitution of which I fully accepted, though I did not approve of certain interpretations

¹ *Sic.* But on p. 33 this recreation is said to have lasted half an hour. (Trans.

and tendencies? Could I have faith in a community so deeply divided? I was prepared to hope so. It seemed to me that if I left Solesmes I should be lost. Often did I repeat the formula of monastic consecration of the host: *Suscipe me, Domine, secundum eloquium tuum, et vivam, et non confundas me ab expectatione mea!* Often did I ask God to let me die there, immediately. Priesthood, especially after what I had been told in the house of novices, seemed to me full of dangers. No religious order had any attraction for me.

I was not the only one who was troubled about my destiny. My master was already picturing me back again in the seminary. As the pupils returned on October 1, and he was to leave Solesmes during the last week of September to preach a retreat some distance away, he resolved to settle my affair before his departure. He summoned me to him and began to speak about obedience. "Profess," he said to me, "could you bring yourself to absolute obedience? Could you for the rest of your life be a nurse, a gardener, or, as seems more likely here, a printer?" "Had I felt any inclination towards nursing the sick or cultivating the land," I replied, "I should have knocked at the door of the brethren of Saint Jean de Dieu or of the Trappists. As for the occupation of proof-reader, or book-keeper, or packer of books, it was not for this that I came to Solesmes."

Having taken this turn, our conversation was bound to culminate in my condemnation. Dom Logerot had, I felt, put me in a position where he would easily have the last word. I was distressed. The tone of my reply was so entreating that it would have touched a heart of marble. But, without relenting in the least, my master referred to certain headaches from which I had suffered, and took them as a sign that a more active life would be better for me. He joked at my being unable to sing. "For that reason," he said, "the Carthusians would not accept you. They have singing tests in which you would fail."

After this conversation I hastened to submit my difficulties concerning obedience to the Father Abbot. "Why have you

got this into your head, my child?" he said. "In my assignment of occupations I always take dispositions and tastes into account. I never thought of making a printer of you." He consoled me in a fatherly way. "The only fault I have to find with you," he said, "is that you are too reserved. In certain respects you are still quite a stranger to us." I did not deem it wise to explain the reason for this reserve, but the Father Abbot was so kind that I left him full of hope.

When Dom Logerot heard of this conversation he grew colder towards me. I returned to the Father Abbot. He was still very kind, but with a difference. "No, my child," he said, "you will not leave us; only I shall not yet give you the novice's cowl—I cannot." At another time he said to me frankly: "I leave you to decide, without attempting to advise you, either to go or stay." Dom Logerot's influence was becoming more and more apparent.

In order not to appear unkind, the Father Abbot advised me to consult Dom Delatte, recently nominated Prior, and himself offered to lay my case before the Mother Abbess. The Abbess considered my vocation doubtful, and thought that subsequent events would reveal God's will for me. Dom Delatte, who was above everything desirous not to be brought into conflict with the master of the novices, replied that perhaps a more active life would suit me better. "One may," he added, referring to himself, "leave Solesmes in one's youth, return later, and even, a few years later still, find oneself Prior, though unworthy." There was nothing for me to do but go.

As soon as I adopted this solution Dom Logerot became very cordial. He explained to me that God had vouchsafed unto me abundant grace in that He had sent me to Solesmes to initiate me into the Holy Liturgy and the purest theological doctrines. The divine plan would unfold itself in the future. Possibly I might use my talents (he ventured on that word) in some other religious community—in the Oratory of Rennes for instance (he did not like the Oratory, which went by the name of "France"!). At the moment it was obvious that my line of action had been traced

for me: I was to return to the seminary. "The teaching is not very good, the management is not perfect; but, with what you have learned during your noviciate, you can fill in the gaps."

After long reflection I began to think that the Father Abbot might be right. Solesmes had certainly widened my horizon—at least, so I believed. It had revealed to me ecclesiastical antiquity, a better method of prayer, a broader spirituality. Perhaps it was God's will that I should go elsewhere to ripen this good seed. What certain of the Solesmes monks proudly called "our ideas" were already, among many of them, mere clichés instead of living and reasoned convictions. Yes, perhaps it was better for me to go.

My departure had not yet been finally decided upon when I wrote to one of my uncles, a doctor of the neighbourhood. He had vowed never to come and see me. I now hastened to persuade him to break a vow which had distressed me. He came at once, showing as much joy at my probable departure as if I had been raised from the dead. He advised me to become a medical student, and offered to enable me to do so, arguing that if I had tried to be a Benedictine it was because I did not feel myself in the right place in the seminary, and that it would be foolish to return there. Neither his generosity nor his arguments tempted me for a second; and, when he saw me so firmly resolved to return to the ranks of the clergy, his joy diminished. "You do not know in what you are involving yourself," he said gravely; "you are relapsing into a lesser folly. Perhaps you will end by becoming reasonable."

On September 28, my departure was finally settled. On that day I wrote to my parents and to the Superior of the High Seminary at Angers to announce my return on October 1.¹ Here is my mother's reply:—

MY DEAR ALBERT,

I answer your letter at once. Your father made a great sacrifice when he allowed you to go.

¹ My parents had exchanged their shop at Luché for a hat shop at Angers, in order to give my brother and sister the educational advantages offered by a town.

But for my part, as I have always told you, with a sincerity never absent from my dealings with you—I have never (not at least for a long while) concealed my opinions from you, whether they were right or wrong—I had no sacrifice to make. I still think the world is so sad! Come then; I know that you have not forgotten the glory of God, and that you still wish to do his holy will.

Good-bye, my dear Albert. We expect you.

Your Mother,

LÉONTINE HOUTIN.

On September 30, during the day, I paid my farewell visits to the few Fathers with whom I had been specially intimate. I intended to take my leave of the brethren of the noviciate during the latest evening recreation. Fearing lest my feelings might be too much for me, I learnt a few phrases by heart in the hope that the first words might suggest others. But hardly had I begun when I burst into tears. I heard later that several of the brethren were weeping. My grief must have been heartrending to produce such an effect. Generally any one who leaves the noviciate is despised as unworthy or scorned as a coward.

The next morning I took train for Angers, with my heart more sore than it had ever been.

Solesmes was still, as we shall see later, to play an important part in my life. I was too thoroughly impregnated with Catholic doctrine to understand the meaning and the bearing of what I had seen. Later that was all to become clear. Here I merely observe that I had had a memorable experience—the experience of the intense mystic life as lived by my own soul, and as lived in one of the most illustrious of religious orders. Further, I had been plunged into the Middle Ages. Were not the ideas of Solesmes as medieval as those mystic maladies, those prophecies and visions, which were attributed to the nuns of St. Cecilia?¹

This spiritual experience, which it is so difficult and yet so necessary for moderns to understand if they would fathom religious sentiment to the depths and explain the so-called supernatural, I might well have acquired under much worse conditions. In spite of its faults, and compared with the

¹ See *Ma Grande Mystique*.

seminaries and other noviciates with which I was to be brought into contact later, the noviciate of Solesmes was worthy and fervent. The daily reading of the rule of St. Benedict, of the annals of the Order, of the biographies of Abbots and Abbesses who, up to the Revolution, had played important parts and belonged to some of the greatest families ; the influence of the convent of St. Cecilia, wherein prevailed the most aristocratic ideas—all imparted to the community of Solesmes (which, nevertheless, was in no way linked with the older pre-Revolution Benedictine congregations) a kind of reflection of the traditional dignity of St. Benedict and of the glory of his Order. Here the personalities of the candidates were less distorted than elsewhere ; and, above all, they were not degraded. One of my friends, a priest, told me that among the Redemptorists, to whom his search for the ideal had led him in his blindness, a punishment most commonly inflicted on novices was to make him walk in the garden or the courtyard wearing his chamber utensil on his head. In certain Jesuit houses the efficacy of such utensils is equally appreciated. In other houses the novices are grossly insulted—their faces are spat upon,¹ their bodies are trampled underfoot. As all are liable to have to submit to such things, they involve no one in any special disgrace. For most of the superiors who order them they are mere farces designed to teach the victims to put on a good face under every disagreeable circumstance—and, above all, designed to break the will. Those who resort to such ignominious methods have pocketed all shame ; they will brazenly betray the brother they have trampled underfoot and spat upon ; they will be the audacious preachers of every falsehood, janissaries ready for any kind of work.

At Solesmes ultra-eccentric saints were not held up to us as models. The filth of St. Benedict Labrus is not to be imitated in a community ; it would mortify the ascetic himself less than his neighbours. Neither did we hear loathsome

¹ See my *Vie de Père Hyacinthe*, ch. iii. One of my friends, a priest, who was serving his noviciate with the Dominicans of Corbara, was dismissed by them for having refused to spit on the face of another novice.

penances extolled, such as those of Father John of the Sacred Heart, who drank his urine and devoured his excrement. His first hagiographer, the Abbot Timon-David,¹ a great friend of Benedictines, took counsel with Dom Couturier as to whether he ought to tell the whole truth as to this. The Father Abbot advised him not to do so. It was while telling of this consultation that I heard him denounce such aberrations.

He was too refined to approve of them; but I, as a historian, make bold to blame him for having counselled their omission. Never can any well-authorized fact be superfluous in the study of mystics. If God suffers scatophagians² to exist among them, why should one not say so?

The fine exterior of the Solesmes noviciate only rendered it more formidable—that is to say, more alluring to young men. Facts, simple facts, which might have enlightened them, were concealed. A fortnight after my arrival I saw a young novice leave, whose perpetual prayerfulness was held up to us as a model, and one which we greatly admired. We were merely told that family affairs had compelled him to go home. I also heard of a young father who, a few months before my arrival, had fallen ill on the very day when he was taking the vows, and who had been sent home to be nursed by his family. It was not until some years later that I learned the truth about these two unfortunate beings: they had gone mad. One lived in a lunatic asylum; the other hanged himself. These cases were all the more significant as indications of the type of holiness then in vogue at the noviciate in that the Mother Abbess considered them both high types of mysticism.

I had not the slightest suspicion that the mysticism of the noviciate might have such results. Nevertheless, it did not altogether appeal to me. On the other hand, the ultra-

¹ *La Vie du Serviteur de Dieu, Louis Maulbon d'Arbaumont*—known in religion as the reverend Father Jean du Sacré Cœur, confessor of the nuns Victimes du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus (Marseilles, 1887, in 8°).

² A Catholic writer, the Viscount Maxime de Montmorand, in his book, *Psychologie des Mystiques Catholiques Orthodoxes*, p. 77, maintains that Christian ascetics are nearly all scatophagians.

montanism of the congregation seemed to me equally exaggerated. It was more Catholic than the Pope; and for that reason Cardinal Pitra had ventured in 1885 openly to remonstrate with Leo XIII. As for theological matters, with which I was not conversant, I was not able to criticize that which I heard maintained; but with regard to questions of ecclesiastical history we had in the noviciate enough books at our disposal to enable us to assess the value of certain judgments. Much was made of the so-called revelations of Marie d'Agréda and of Catherine Emmerich; they were used as complements to the Gospels. I did not then observe the inconsistencies in the Gospels themselves, though I noticed those of these visionaries. Certain mystical works were attributed to St. Denys the Areopagite, first Bishop of Paris; but it seemed to me impossible to maintain the authenticity of these books or to identify their author. I laid my misgivings before Dom Fromage. He replied with a pitiful smile: "If you wish to doubt, then you can doubt anything." This did not reassure me. If one could doubt anything, then could one not just as well believe anything one wished to? One day I heard the Father Abbot, in whom I had great faith, describe Cardinal Bérulle as a forger—in his treatment of the Carmelites—and maintain that as such he was excommunicated. In vain did I study the question. I could not convince myself that this prelate had knowingly falsified a papal bull.¹ Thus frequently certain affirmations left me doubtful, while others left me cold. It seemed to me that mere opinions were too passionately contended about, and that subsidiary questions were regarded as supreme. Certain pronouncements on the manner of writing history disturbed me. My temperament was too reasonable or too rationalist for such an atmosphere. The good Father Abbot was quite right when he said to me: "You are still in certain respects a stranger among us."² As my studies advanced, the

¹ To denounce Cardinal de Bérulle was, moreover, a tradition inherited from Dom Guéranger. Cf. Bernier, *Notes Particulières sur la polémique du R. P. Abbé de Solesmes, relatives aux Jésuites et aux Jansénistes* (Angers, 1858), pp. 65-7.

² See *ante*, p. 39.

difference that separated us could but increase. It became a gulf.¹

¹ In my *Dom Couturier, Lettre à Dom Chamard, Notes sur les Profès de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, une Grande Mystique*, will be found further reminiscences of my noviciate. I have not told all. One of my desires is some day to make a book out of the rest of my observations and the masses of notes that I have made concerning the history of the community of Solesmes. But here I do not think it well to write more. *Sat brata biberunt.*

CHAPTER V

MY THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

The House of Theology—The Professors—Professional Training—Sulpician Seriousness—An Aa—Captation.

1888–1891

ON returning to the seminary I seemed unconscious of recent events. I was like one who has awakened from a sad and confused dream. Directors and seminarists were extremely surprised to see me back again. I had written, it appeared, such rapturous letters from Solesmes that others were encouraged to come and share my happiness. In fact, two of my young fellow students, Félix Marais and Jean de Puniet, had started for the noviciate. The former arrived there on the eve of my departure, and was deeply affected by the scene at my farewell.¹ The latter I met as I entered the ante-chamber of M. Houbart. He had just taken his leave of the superior, and was starting for the station. When he saw me he could not refrain from uttering a cry of distress, and he reproached me with not having announced to him my return.² Possibly had I not shown them the way they would not have gone to Solesmes; they knew no one there. A monk told me that Providence had used me as an instrument in the cases of these two elect. Such conjunctures are called the mysteries of grace.

I did my best to resume my life as a seminarist. Some-

¹ Dom Felix-Raphael Marais died at Beaupréau (Maine et Loire) in 1908, at the age of thirty-nine, in the eighteenth year of his religious profession. His monastic life was very unhappy. Unable to endure what he called the régime of terror (letter of October 20, 1898), he asked for permission to retire to La Grande Chartreuse. Dom Delatte refused him this favour, and sent him first to the Priory of Kergonan, and then to the Abbey of Saint-Maur.

² Dom Jean de Puniet de Parry is now abbot of a monastery of the congregation of Solesmes.

times I regarded myself as a Solesmian constrained by necessity to leave his beloved family. I accused myself of having abused divine favour; I was paying for it. Sometimes I tried to take to myself the rhapsodical consolations of Dom Logerot. Had not God, by denying me the gift of song, denied me the Benedictine vocation? Had he not merely taken me to Solesmes in order to imbue me with those ideas which were to direct my ecclesiastical life? In the eleventh century no greater grace could be vouchsafed to a priest than to know Cluny. Was not Solesmes the Cluny of our day? When I laid such reasoning before M. Houbart he could not understand why Dom Logerot had not found me enough of a Benedictine.

Henceforth it was not only in private conversations that M. Houbart prepared me for the priesthood. I met him every evening at the spiritual reading. What a contrast between his teaching and that of the noviciate! Not one word of the splendid poetry of the liturgy. The essence of his religious teaching, derived from St. Paul and M. Olier, was, as he ceaselessly repeated, "to cast aside the old man" and to "bear one's cross." *The Imitation of Jesus Christ* was, in his opinion, too tender a book. If ever he gave a chapter of it to be read as penance, it was merely out of respect for tradition, as he had such and such a book read in the refectory, and as during the spiritual reading he eternally expounded Rodriguez' *Treatise on Christian Perfection*. "Another author," he would say to me sometimes, "who does not penetrate to fundamentals; he does not sufficiently insist on original sin."

During my second period in the seminary the greater part of our time was devoted to the study of a theological text-book, divided into two parts—one dogma, the other ethics. This book was well described by an Oratorian, Father Lecanuët, in a picture of the great French seminarists at this time. Here is his opinion of it:—

The text-book generally used is the ill-digested work of a Sulpician, written in bad Latin, and entitled *Institutiones Theologicæ, auctore Bonal*. Impossible to imagine a drier and duller book. Nothing in

it speaks to the heart or rouses the intellect. The great doctrine of the Church is carved into pieces called treatises ; each treatise is sliced up into what are called theses ; each thesis is demonstrated by three different kinds of proof—proofs of Holy Scripture, proofs of tradition, proofs of reason. "What could be more artificial," recently wrote the Bishop of La Rochelle, Mgr. Lecamus, "than these fragments of the Scriptures, of the proceedings of the Councils, of the Fathers, without any critical sense, any explanation or discussion ? And the reasoned arguments—how often do they not seem insufficiently reasoned !" Meanwhile the unhappy pupil tries to assimilate these formulæ and these texts which the professor explains more or less badly. No written work, at least in most seminaries ; no study, no thoroughgoing research, not even any independent thought ; exercises of memory, and that is all.¹

The professor of dogmatic theology was M. Mathurin Laroche. His was said to be one of the finest brains in the Society of St. Sulpice, but he was worn out. The orthodox among the Angevin clergy reproached him with having compromised himself in liberalism and ontologism. They watched him, and sometimes complained of his teaching to the Bishop. Mgr. Freppel did not like him. "Laroche," he said one day, "had better behave himself." His lessons suffered from ill health, from the constraint put upon him, and also from his horror of bringing theology down to be nothing but a catechism for young men of middling intelligence. Here and there were scattered through his expositions words of bitter pride or of charming delicacy, revealing a later Malebranche, persecuted and on the decline.²

Moral theology was taught by M. Letourneau, the superior of the Philosophy House. He was an ardent advocate of the doctrines of St. Alphonso dei Liguori. When the exposition of these doctrines astonished us, the Professor, anxious to meet every objection, would cite with emphasis the high praise which the Holy See had lavished on this latter-day doctor of the Church. This praise I took with a grain of salt, like those words of a pope about St. Thomas Aquinas : "All the articles he has written are miracles." They seemed

¹ Lecanuet, *L'Eglise de France sous la Troisième République*, 1st edition, p. 294.

² Canon Alexis Crosnier has written a delicate biographical article on him : *M. Laroche, Prêtre de Saint-Sulpice* (1826-1911), Angers, 911 pp.

to me pious exaggerations, and I was no more astonished to find certain popes Liguorians than to find Leo XIII so ardent a Thomist. Moreover, we had not the complete works of St. Alphonso at our disposal, and every day brought us some new lessons. I neither rebelled nor raged against a system which certain anti-clericals regard as a stone of stumbling. I believed then, and I still believe, that St. Alphonso held some strange ethical views, and that he was extraordinarily lacking in historical sense. But I do not like his doctrine as a whole to be condemned as loose or immoral. I invite those who are tempted to condemn it thus to try putting it in practice as a whole. They would then be better able to judge.

Besides the daily theological classes we had classes once or twice a week in Scripture, ecclesiastical history, canon law, the liturgy, and preaching. M. Modeste-Stéphane le Bailly¹ taught Scripture. As in the case of his colleague in the Philosophy House, M. Achet, he had been given this chair because he was thought to be too worn out to hold one of greater importance. He was, moreover, a worthy complement to M. Achet both in the oddity of his person and in the poverty of his teaching. His lessons consisted in a brief and dry analysis of *Le Manuel Biblique*, which he considered too advanced. Instead of teaching it, he preferred to read to us out of old note-books which he had inherited from a predecessor, and which represented Biblical teaching at the time of the Restoration. Sometimes he would cry out triumphantly: "Ha! Now let them come on, those modern rationalist gentlemen!" Considering it useless to dwell on the refutation of impious chicanery, he would delight in mystic and moral interpretations. For example, at the end of St. Bernard, in his first sermon for Epiphany Day he would expound at length the testimony given by the Dove to the Lamb. The symbolism of these two creatures and the suitability of their meeting filled him with rapture. In his lessons on preaching he manifested less incompetence and

¹ He died in the High Seminary of Angers, on April 14, 1903, at the age of seventy.

more self-control. His advice to catechumens was even excellent.

The course in canon law, a mere exposition and recitation of M. Icard's Latin text-book, was only one hour a week—on Thursdays. The professor was M. Baron, our former Professor of Philosophy. He had been forced into this post as well as into the chair of ecclesiastical history as a substitute for M. Marion, who had been sent to another seminary. Judicious, industrious, having been introduced to critical studies by M. Duchesne, whose lectures he had attended at l'Institut Catholique,¹ he acquitted himself well in both subjects. In his eyes canon law for a bishop consisted practically in doing the Pope's will, for a priest in doing his bishop's will. This conception, which permeated all his lessons, tended to make them either a lesson in archæology or an exposition of purely judicial opinions, the interest of which was merely theoretical. I was too young then to understand the depth, the realism, and the honesty of such a point of view.

The liturgical course was nothing but a series of admonitions given by M. Ollive of the philosophy house.

In addition to these professors, the staff of the seminary included an aged director, M. Schwarz, who had retired, and the steward, M. Ruchaud.

The former had known survivors of the *ancien régime* and imitated their manners. When a seminarist at Lyons he had powdered his hair for the Archbishop's service. In conversation he avoided terms which were not general and august. Never could he have been brought to speak of a candle—it was always a flame or a torch. The periphrases and metaphors of Delille and Batteux adorned his discourses. They created the impression of a current of water, clear and brilliant, but shallow, confined between two straight banks,

¹ M. Baron wrote to me on September 26, 1900: "There is progress in the world of thought. The word 'critic' has no longer the irritating sound it had fifteen years ago. See what has happened to M. Duchesne. I enjoyed the privilege of being his pupil, and the honour of sometimes receiving his confidences, in 1879-81. At that time his admirers were rare. They had to conceal their admiration. To-day the Abbé Duchesne is the champion of science, and his adversaries have been intimidated."

carefully canalized, devoid not merely of any picturesque irregularity, but of almost every sign of life. He himself was nothing but an automaton. In his rôle of spiritual director he always detained his penitents for an equal length of time—the proper time—however empty the conversation. Everything he did—even the daily perusal of the newspaper—was performed with the same regularity. When one saw him or heard him pass, one always knew where he was going and the exact hour of the day. Our directors extolled this mechanical exactness as an indication of great holiness. His charitableness seemed to confirm this interpretation. For no matter who was being discussed, when he thought it his turn to intervene he began to praise : piety, cheerfulness, memory, musical or oratorical talent, good manners—he always found something to admire.

We rarely saw M. Ruchaud,¹ except when we paid him for our board. He seldom spent the recreation hours with us, and when he came he talked only to one or two seminarists. I liked to keep him company, although one had to bend down to hear him ; he spoke in a low voice, and was very short. Of all our professors he was certainly the least intellectual, the least literary ; but his conversation savoured of experience. He was, however, as repressive as all the others. Did he not say to me one day : “ You incline to general ideas ; strive against them ; mistrust them ” ?

At the close of my second year's theology M. Houbart, placed on the retired list, was recalled to the Issy house. It would certainly have been better had he been asked to relinquish his post of Superior earlier. But, though he may have been too old to rule so important an institution, I loved him none the less. My respect for him has increased with time and experience. Never did he cite an Old Testament text as proof of a dogma. Some concluded that his unsyncretical mind could perceive nothing but the point in question, and did trace it to its origin. Now, I believe that he understood the futility of those Biblical quotations : he knew

¹ He died on December 29, 1912.

Hebrew too well. Moreover, worn out as he was, he was more open-minded than many of his colleagues.

M. Houbart's successor was M. Letourneau. This promotion entailed a rearrangement of our theology course. M. Laroche became Professor of Ethics, and we ceased to hear the praises of St. Alphonso dei Liguori. The teaching of dogma was confided to a young Sulpician, M. Paul Gontier, who had come from the Dijon Seminary. The tendency of this house was less narrow than that of Saint Sulpice, of which, so it was jokingly said, it was but the third order. And, in fact, M. Gontier, though much attached to traditional theses, treated them in a more living and personal way than our other masters. His style possessed both the faults and the excellence which are likely to attract the young. Perhaps he has corrected his faults. Whether he has or not may be seen by reference to his published works.¹ When he uttered his words of edification, with head thrown back, eyes half closed, and voice vibrating and mysterious, he was too obviously posing as the inspired prophet. The way in which he placed himself on an equality with his aged colleagues showed that he had a high opinion of himself. After having been for several years professor in the High Seminary at Angers, he was appointed superior in the Seminary of Philosophy at Autun. His orthodoxy was considered satisfactory; but the pride and independence of mind he showed in his relations with the superior of the theology department were his ruin. He was sent as an ordinary professor to the Bayeux Seminary. However, his ability soon raised him to the rank of Superior.

A change of Superior means a new reign. M. Letourneau had seen, or had been informed some time before, that he might have the good fortune to replace M. Houbart. By observing and questioning he had prepared himself for the

¹ *Souvenirs du Séminaire ; Explication du Pontifical et Retraites de Rentrée* (Angers, 1898 et 1905) ; *Le Dogme de la Sainte Trinité, Etude Historique, Scripturaire et Philosophique* (Paris, 1905) ; *De la Méthode des Sciences Philosophiques dans les Petits et les Grands Séminaires* (Paris, 1906) ; *La Vocation Sacerdotale. A Propos d'une Controverse*. A series of articles in the magazine *Le Prêtre* (Arras) from March 30 till May 25, 1911.

post. When it fell to him he was thirty-eight. Baldness from forehead to tonsure, a slightly receding skull, eyes fixed and searching, beneath slight flat eyebrows, prominent nose, lips thin and compressed, a short chin with a dimple in the centre, constituted a grave, somewhat unusual, face, the age of which was not easy to fix.

The new Superior was too prudent to carry out immediately the numerous reforms he had in mind. What I saw of his rule was during a period of transition. Under his predecessor the Angers Seminary resembled the Paris house about 1840. M. Letourneau wished to conform it to his ideal, the Saint-Sulpice of 1875. I profited somewhat from this régime. At the spiritual readings we were no longer condemned to a perpetual commentary on Rodriguez; the subject varied according to circumstances. In the refectory the books read were not so antique. But this modernity was not extreme. With regard to dogma, M. Letourneau had accepted the neo-scholastic tendency imposed by Leo XIII; but when this Pope began his policy of a rally to the Republic he would have liked to see him replaced by another Gregory VII. His Scriptural knowledge consisted in a profound disdain of original texts, fortunately, as he held, supplemented by the Vulgate, of whose commentators Menochius still remained the king. Eager to be correctly informed, and afraid of making any mistake, he resorted to petty methods involving the danger of flattery, sneaking, and spying. His grounds for judgment having been obtained by methods often dangerous, he pronounced sentence, which was without appeal. Its object was to put every one in his place, when it was a place that pleased him. If not, then it was an irrevocable sentence of exclusion.

What a responsibility to introduce into the Church young men who, if they continue too liberal in mind or in morals, may disturb it or create a scandal! Convinced of the gravity of their task, our masters were most anxious to give our characters the right turn. The teaching was purely professional, and always one-sided. It was adapted not to the average but to the inferior grade of intelligence. True,

every priest should be acquainted with the rudiments of dogma, and with the principles of the powerful ethical system which he had to teach. But this necessity was no excuse for the uninspiring and wearisome lessons inflicted on us. At Angers intelligent seminarists did nothing but mark time and be bored; they were not even able to satisfy their hunger by consulting a good library. The only one at our disposal was nothing but a collection of old books, and there was no one to show us how to make use of it. Arrived at the age when one is capable of producing the greatest amount of work, when one is most eager to learn, when in public service young men put forth their greatest efforts, we produced nothing. Our masters behaved as though they thought knowledge useless and dangerous for us.

Worse still, they concealed from us not merely the conflict between traditional theology and modern discovery, but things we had the right to know before we could contract an engagement with the full knowledge of what we were doing. In philosophy, for example, in the first Scripture class, M. Achet dictated to us a long list of the chapters of the Bible which we were forbidden to read before becoming sub-deacons, or at least without especial permission from our director.¹ The lay world will wonder how such an injunction could be obeyed. But it was. For my part, though not lacking curiosity, I observed the injunction during the whole of my first year in the seminary. It was not until I went to Solesmes that I read the Bible right through. And for years I never read except on my knees—not a very critical position.

Our teachers could more easily impose upon us with regard to certain arguments the force of which, brought up as we were in the hot house of the seminary, we were incapable of realizing. They dwelt at great length on arguments easily refuted, such as the Church's complicity in the

¹ The following are the chapters: Genesis xix, xxix, xxx, xxxviii; Leviticus xv, xviii, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, xxiii; Numbers v; Deuteronomy xxii, xxiii, xxiv, xxv; Judges xix; Ruth iii, iv; Kings, 2nd bk., xi, xiii; 3rd bk., i; Proverbs v, vi, viii; Ezekiel xvi, xvii; the whole Song of Solomon.

Massacre of St. Bartholomew. M. Achet admitted that Jonah was not swallowed by a whale. Of such an act of deglutition the great cetacean would be incapable; but for the sperm the action would present no difficulty, and he gave numerous examples. Familiar with the legend as we were from childhood, we were satisfied with this concord between science and revelation. Thus we were not disturbed by the avoidance of certain questions such as the condemnation of Galileo and the history of the Inquisition. If they were not dealt with, it was because there was no time. Nevertheless, being surprised by the complete silence of my professors of dogma as to the history of the coercive power of the Church, I asked one of my fellow disciples then undergoing a cure in the hospital of Saint-Martin-la-Forêt to question the canon, Jules Morel,¹ who had retired there. The answer of the aged ultramontane journalist was: "Read my books; I am an authority on the subject; but you must know that the proposition, *Hæreticos comburi est contra voluntatem Spiritus Sancti*, was condemned by Leo X." The text surprised me, and I referred in confidence to M. Baron. "You inquire too far," he said; "I shall not deal with so delicate a matter in my classes. To enter into such questions can profit neither teacher nor taught. Later you will examine them; for you will not have finished your studies when you leave here." As my question was inspired by mere curiosity, I thought it would not be seemly to insist, and I did not.

This system of teaching resulted primarily from a belief in the immense importance of faith. Candidates for the priesthood certainly ought to know the truth; but, above all things, their faith should be strengthened. The second principle effaces the first. People are encouraged to refer everything to the authority of the Church, and reason is practically suppressed.

When he expounded to us the famous prophecy of the coming of Emmanuel in Isaiah, M. le Bailly seemed to think it quite natural that the great seer should have given to

¹ See my book *Un Dernier Gallican*.

King Ahaz as the sign of an approaching event the birth of a child which was to take place some centuries later. Our requests for an explanation surprised him. They met with nothing but a demonstration, repeated with greater and greater vehemence until the pupils, astounded, gave up questioning him. I consulted M. Houbart on this subject. He, like a true rationalist, pointed out the difficulties of the sacred text, confessed to me that he found them insuperable, and ended by an act of faith. I followed his example, and gave up my inquiry. After all, the object of my doubt was a mere detail. I was sure of the foundation. I preferred to admit frankly with M. Houbart that I did not understand than with M. le Bailly to satisfy myself with words. I have often thought since that the aged superior was one of the few among my teachers who were quite intellectually honest. The others, unconsciously no doubt, were more or less so. One of them constantly recommended us to arrive at convictions which should be practical. Since then I have discovered it to be more important that they should be true. M. Letourneau lent me a number of books by Liberal Catholics—Newman, Gibbons, Frémont, Girodon, Duillié de Saint-Projet, Perreyve, Gratry, Charles Perraud. I discovered later that he did not like them, and that he did not consider them very sound. He thought they would serve to strengthen my vocation and to give me a change from my detested manual. Had he not introduced me to these reasonable apologetics, I might not have been able to stand the theology of our manual; I might perhaps have left the seminary.

M. Letourneau's method was too much like decoying. And it was not only in intellectual but also in ethical matters that he practised it. Preaching an ordination retreat, he showed us graphically the gravity of the vow of chastity we were about to take. Then he appealed to the self-love of the young, crying: "If you draw back, you are cowards."

To resume, the Sulpicians considered the true sign of a vocation to be an outward gravity—like their own. To be

efficacious and dominant such gravity must suffice to conceal a lack of educational grounding and of further studies. To this singular conception the French clergy owes its reputation throughout the nineteenth century for a dignity inherited from the century of Louis XIV. But through this attitude also it has become an anæmic body, concealing great intellectual poverty beneath a correct exterior. Love of appearances produced in the Church itself an illusion of which it became the dupe, and in time the victim. Persistent gravity, as Cicero and Voltaire¹ remarked, "is but the mask of mediocrity." Mediocrity is not a principle of life. And, nevertheless, what fine recruits the Church made!

The Angers Seminary enjoyed an excellent reputation among Sulpicians. It was considered one of the best managed in the society. I have no difficulty in believing it. In the nineteenth century the greater part of Anjou had remained a Christian province. All the seminarists, by atavism and education, were fundamentally Christian. In so large a number (in the house of theology there were always more than a hundred pupils) there might be some who were there to please their mothers, or to escape from military service, or to ensure for themselves a comfortable middle-class life; but even those had received a Christian upbringing. The others dedicated themselves to the priesthood through devoutness or in search for an ideal. The whole represented an assembly of the moral if not the intellectual élite. Some were saints. Nevertheless, generally speaking, there was less piety in the theology than in the philosophy house. Early fervour had diminished. Seminarists sorted themselves out. Among the students of the three different years, or among those attending the same courses of lectures, affinities were sought and found. Groups were formed, corresponding to different degrees of mysticism.

From among the most zealous of these groups was recruited "a little society," which was the heir and the continuator of "the Aa" of the seventeenth and eighteenth

¹ Voltaire's speech on being received into the Academy.

centuries.¹ The secret of the existence of this society was so well kept that all through my time in the seminary I knew nothing of it. One may be a member of an ecclesiastical body for a long while without guessing everything concealed behind its respectable façade. I was to realize this more and more. I discovered this society a few years later, during my minute researches into the life of Dom Charles Couturier, who had been a member of it. I was able to obtain its statutes as well as the list of its chief members. These documents explained to me certain obscure happenings in my seminary life, and shed a new light on the careers of certain canons and fat priests of an unctuous nullity. "The Little Society" did its own recruiting. When it considered a seminarist worthy to be admitted it charged one of its members, with a thousand precautions, to ask him if he would join a union for edification to which he himself belonged. For such an honour a fondness for the minor devotions and religious exercises was required. But distinguished and even keen minds were avoided. For instance, one who certainly belonged to this category, M. Jean-Baptiste Goupil, later Superior of the Low Seminary of Mongazon, was not invited. The Society's statutes were certainly edifying, but they tended to encourage false zeal. Spying, sneaking, and the cabal spirit cannot have been exceptional in this kind of community, since in 1893 a Sulpician of Bordeaux, M. Louis Antoine Bertrand, who created a faction in the society, published an anonymous pamphlet on their history, with the unavowed object of obtaining their abolition. This worthy author seemed to impute the faults of the Aa to their Jesuitical spirit. Historically, this view may be correct. But, as a matter of fact, the Sulpicians did not suffer from that spirit.²

¹ For greater details on this subject see articles by P. Joseph Brûcker in *Les Etudes* (March, 1896, pp. 502-3, and May, 1914, pp. 528-53). At Angers "the Little Society" had for its predecessors *Les mystiqueurs*, as may be seen in the *Mémoires de François-Yves Besnard* (Souvenirs d'un Nonagénaire), who entered the High Seminary in 1770.

² Ten years after I had left the seminary—that is to say, towards the end of my stay in Anjou—the spy system of "the Little Society" became so odious that the seminarists sent those whom they called "the bowed heads" to

Whether or no they belonged to "the Little Society," I knew clerics abounding in zeal, scrupulously observing the rule, and living an austere life. Certain recollections make me think they had remained completely ingenuous. They were the rare fruits of an education apart, in the midst of a chosen family. Such miracles can hardly exist now, since seminarists have been compelled to do military service.

Below these was a series of types of infinite variety. Some immediately assumed that mask of gravity so much appreciated by our teachers, and seemed to be serious before their time. This fine outward pose concealed diverse sentiments, but the continuity of effort and the influence of behaviour on morals transformed these eager disciples completely and very early. Others were free from ambition. Intelligence, love of work, a strong will, a suppleness more clever than honest, but compatible with devoutness and loyalty to their calling, the resolution to make a virtue of necessity, characterized them. Some seemed to have arrived already. The seminary was for them the happy termination of their boring college studies, which they had passed through anyhow. Their complacency was sometimes strangely disturbed by the directors threatening to expel them.

I was struck by the rarity of the dogmatic temperament. Too many obstacles check its development in the world, and also in ecclesiastical colleges which have come ever so slightly under the influence of the national university. The priest who is intransigent in his early youth now hardly exists. If he becomes a fanatic, it is through ambition or as the result of prolonged suggestion.

The greatest drawback to my seminary was its rusticity. It contained too many peasants' sons, although the excellent Anjou farmer is of no despicable stock. But these peasants' sons retained their bad manners. They were only too happy to be free from their schoolmasters' control. They enjoyed

Coventry. They regarded them as nothing but pious informers, working individually. The Superior of that day gave devotional readings to inculcate charity—that is to say, an attitude of good and simple comradeship in general—towards the secret spies of authority.

having a separate room and freedom to employ their leisure. Some who possessed real virtues were intolerable. They improved, doubtless, when, as parish priests, they had rubbed off their angles and come in contact with society.

This was the raw material which our directors had to fashion. They had to put it into the Sulpician mould. One must adapt oneself or go. In that diocese, overflowing with priests, elimination was easy. Now, the lot of any one leaving the seminary was hard unless he were inspired by supernatural motives. Those who returned to the world, whether or no they had passed their bachelor's examination, did not prosper. They became shopmen, reporters, commercial travellers—occupations which, as described by them in the seminary parlour, did not sound attractive. Besides, it was believed that, in order to be a good priest, one had only to practise the duties of a prescribed mechanical piety, and that even some of these might be passed over. Such considerations rendered docile those who, under other circumstances, might have been rebellious, and induced them to behave in such a manner as to be judged worthy of taking orders.

The call to orders was conveyed by a note from the Sulpician who arranged the ordinations, and who thus invited the recipient to take part in the ceremony. The invitation had been decided upon by the plenary council of the directors (the confessor refraining from expressing an opinion). Our teachers thought they knew their pupils because they spent the recreation hours with them, and especially because they made them talk about one another. Many of those gentlemen excelled in the art of pumping. Delation was systematically practised. I myself have had such extraordinary questions asked me about my intimate friends that I have always marvelled how any one could have so demeaned himself as to put them. The fear of introducing any one unworthy into the ranks of the clergy seems to me hardly sufficient to justify the employment of methods so degrading and so calculated to encourage intrigue. I have often expressed this opinion to good orthodox priests.

They have invariably replied : " In what other way could the directors of seminaries get to know their pupils ? " I have laid this reply before liberal priests. They answered : " There is the true ecclesiastical note. That mentality is clericalism. Combes with his card index was never anything but a miserable priest. "

Furnished with his invitation to take orders, the seminarist would ask his confessor whether he ought to accept. How can men of mature age urge their younger brethren to enter into such a terrible engagement ? All seminary directors have seen public scandals and far more shipwrecks which have never been made known. They have had confided to them bitter suffering of mind and heart. Most of the priests whose misfortunes they have known were pure-minded seminarists, anxious to do what was right. Who can guarantee a better future for those who follow them ? Nevertheless, there are still directors of seminaries. They continue to fill the sanctuary with fresh victims. Were they to falter in their task they would themselves want bread. The bishop would dismiss inefficient priests who could not assure the recruiting of his clergy. Six months after his ordination and six months after the beginning of his work as a parish priest, a poor cleric went and confided his disillusionment to the director of his seminary, a Sulpician. " Oh ! " he said, " if only I had known ; if only you had warned me ! " " If we warned, " replied the director, " no one would be left. " ¹

Yes, I too believe that no one would be left. No one has a vocation like that which the Church of Rome conceives in theory. But there are men in whom noble qualities are so far developed that they do not live for themselves, as do ordinary people, but for God, for an ideal, for their fellow creatures. These are they who constitute the life-force of

¹ This story suggests several others. Here are two. To a complaint from Marcel Hébert, a country priest, his director at Saint-Sulpice, M. Hogan, replied on August 5, 1878 : " You are right. The young are not sufficiently informed concerning the life which awaits them in the priesthood. " A little later a young Paris priest, who has become one of the glories of the Church, said in private to one of his brethren, concerning their common master, Abbé Duchesne : " Those who know ought to warn while there is still time. "

all religions and of all great causes, the élite of all priest-hoods and all apostolates. These the Church of Rome excels in capturing.

After having described our intellectual and spiritual training, I must add that with all my might I endeavoured to enter into this system. Brought up in a very narrow world, having heard peremptorily refuted every heresy ever brought to my knowledge, I was in no way tempted to lose my faith, although natural curiosity had prompted me to put certain indiscreet or dangerous questions. I had difficulties, but not doubts. The Gospels were for me what I had been taught—authentic, unadulterated, veracious documents, which proved the divine foundation of the Church of Rome. That sufficed. The Church represented for me science, morals, art, truth, beauty, and goodness. Nothing prompted me to question either its infallibility or its holiness. The imperfections I perceived in the Church seemed to proceed merely from human frailty. I distinguished between popes and the indefectible chair in which they sit; I distinguished between popes and their surroundings; I was always distinguishing. The liberal theologians whose books were given me to read created in me the illusion of harmony between so-called revelation and science. The discipline of the Church did not alarm me. I believed the Church to be assisted by the Holy Ghost, and to possess divine right to regulate everything that seemed to it expedient—even priestly celibacy.

I wished to become a saintly priest and useful to the Church. In my attempt to realize this ideal I adopted the Benedictine rather than the Sulpician method. I remained addicted to the emotional meditation on the Gospels, mysteries, and liturgical texts as practised in the noviciate. I read daily the passage from the rule of St. Benedict read at Solesmes as the lesson for the day. I mortified the flesh, spending the winter without a fire, never taking recreation, never going into the town. On certain feast days a few seminarists were employed in the cathedral services. I arranged with certain of my brethren who were eager to go

out that whenever my name appeared on the list they should take my place without even speaking to me about it. This seclusion was considered extraordinary. My brethren looked upon me as a monk.

What did the directors of the seminary think of me? In the usual way I ought to have been called to be sub-deacon in June, 1890. I was not. This delay was interpreted by me and my brethren as a punishment for my argumentativeness in the class-room. Was it taken as indicating a doubting mind, or did it merely annoy my professors? Some of my friends, more perspicacious than I, tried in vain to persuade me to keep quiet; and when I was not called they proved to me that they were right. Not having read *La Chartreuse de Parme*, not even being aware of its existence, I did not know the wise counsel which the Duchess Sanseverina gave to her nephew when she sent him to study theology:—

Believe or disbelieve what you are taught, but *never argue*. Imagine that you are being instructed in the rules of a game of whist: would you argue about the rules of whist? Remember there are those who will not fail to note any question you raise. You may be forgiven for some little love affair, if it is discreetly carried on, but not for a single doubt; love fades away as you grow old, doubt increases.¹

As I did not regard theology as a game of whist, nor the priesthood as a career, when my professors' explanations did not seem clear to me I asked for further light.

I can never think of a seminary without sadness. The motives of the youths who enter it may be mixed, but on the whole their hearts are pure, their desires noble, their wills good and strong. And what are the results? A mistaken system: the Church is a prodigious waster of strength. Moreover, the conflict between science and religion renders it more and more difficult for the Church to make use of its clergy.

What has become of my fellow disciples at Angers? How many have I known remarkably gifted who have produced no useful social work, who have allowed themselves to

¹ Stendhal, *La Chartreuse de Parme*, ch. vi, p. 127, ed. Garnier.

become nonentities. The noblest and most evangelical have been persecuted as liberals and as *sillonistes*.¹ Some, after having left the Church, have experienced the greatest difficulty in earning a livelihood. Two ended in madness; one committed suicide.² Having lost touch with the diocese for more than twenty years, I have not been able to follow the evolution of all my brethren. It is true that in the world also one may lose reason and honour. But the fall is not so great and not so sad.

¹ Followers of Marc Sangnier, a liberal Catholic, editor of a periodical, *Le Sillon*. (Trans.)

² He fell a victim to the discipline of celibacy : the cause of his death was known only to a very small number, and the Church, fearing a scandal, buried him with its rites. One of my best teachers, also driven mad by scruples, ended in attempts at suicide, revealing a dramatic doubling of personality. An edifying article has been written concerning him without any reference to the manner of his end. In *La Crise du Clergé* I have already referred to ecclesiastical suicides. I will here give my opinion on the subject. It seems to me right that the Church should not refuse her prayers and even her last blessing to the unhappy men whose existence she has poisoned, and who are driven to put an end to their own lives. What I regret is that ecclesiastical recruiters so carefully conceal the possibility of one growing so tired of the priesthood as to see no other issue but suicide ; for the Church to-day, less humane than the primitive Church, does not permit priests who feel the need of it to return to the lay communion.

CHAPTER VI

PRIESTHOOD

Sub-diaconate—Diaconate—First Journey to Spain—The Monastery of Silos—My Ordination as Priest—Second Journey to Spain—Madrid—Toledo.

1890–1891

WHEN M. Houbart left the High Seminary I lost my director. It was not M. Letourneau whom I chose to succeed him, although he always took a great interest in me. I chose M. Baron, whose accurate mind and whose conscientious teaching had always appealed to me. This was in October, 1890. Three months later I was to enter into the serious engagements of the sub-diaconate. In order to help him in his inquiry into my vocation, M. Baron asked me to submit to him all my papers—correspondence, impressions, and the resolutions taken during retreats. He also asked me to write the story of my life. The manuscript which I then drew up laid the foundation of these memoirs. My director read it very closely, with the avid curiosity of one unacquainted with the subject, at any rate as far as Solesmes was concerned. He asked me many questions about the short account I had written.

I was ordained sub-deacon on December 20, 1890; deacon on May 23, 1891. The term of my studies at the seminary expired in the June of that year. I was to be ordained priest at Christmas. What was to become of me then? The life of a Benedictine remained my ideal.

My relations with the community at Solesmes had never ceased. In 1890 I had arranged to pass the greater part of my vacation—that is, the months of August and September—in the Spanish monastery to which Dom Gaugain¹ had been sent as a resident. As this good Father believed that if

¹ See *ante*, pp. 12, 13, 14.

I had begun my monastic life there I should have ended by making my profession, he wished me to try again. There seemed some truth in the conjecture, and at least the idea was worth considering. In any case, two months of my holiday spent at Silos would enable me to examine it without becoming involved in any engagement, seeing that I should stay there as a pensionnaire, paying for my board and lodging and defraying all other expenses.

I arrived at Burgos on August 1, 1890, in the afternoon. I was taken to the hotel where Dom Gaugain was awaiting me, and I was given a meat lunch, of which I partook, forgetting that it was Friday. Shortly afterwards I remembered and spoke of the matter to Dom Gaugain. "I will send for the Bulls at once," he said. Soon I was given two sheets of poor paper, badly printed, for which I paid fifty centimes, and on which I duly inscribed my name. One affiliated me to the Holy Crusade, the other permitted me—being affiliated—to eat meat in all parts of Spain on nearly all fast days, and, in addition, to deliver a few souls from purgatory and to obtain for myself a great number of plenary indulgences. Dom Gaugain told me that the religious who have taken the vow of poverty are excused from buying "the meat bull, but that during the meals at which they unlawfully eat meat they must recite a *pater* for the Pope." These matters of discipline interested me all the more because my Sulpicians had never mentioned them; possibly because they did not concern France. But such privileges are significant in that they represent a survival of that sale of indulgences which provoked Martin Luther's protest. The next day we visited the magnificent cathedral and a few of the churches. Then we set out for Silos. We arrived in the evening, after a few hours' coach-ride and three hours on mule-back, over precipitous mountains burnt up by the blazing sun and full of glorious memories, being the birthplace of Spanish independence.

The ancient Abbey of Silos was bought back in 1880 by the Benedictines of Ligugé. Deprived of its monks by the exclaustation of 1835, and too vast to be kept up by the

villagers of the neighbourhood, it had almost fallen into ruins.¹ During the ten years they had been in possession, its purchasers had restored it, and the ease and comfort of the community offered a strange contrast to the poverty of the neighbouring village. Through the absence of means of transport, the rare fruits of the earth that the natives arduously drew from the rocky soil had to be consumed on the spot. The coach road was three leagues away, and it was twenty years before Silos became linked up with the system of high roads. Protected from the incursions of travellers by its mountains, this corner of Old Castile retained its sixteenth-century air.

The Superior of the Abbey, who as yet bore merely the title of Prior, was a Profess of Solesmes, Dom Alphonse Guépin. During his noviciate he had been nicknamed "the amiable." He might have been called "the seductive." As he had a really distinguished mind, his congregation, had it not been on the whole fanatical, would have elected him Abbot and Superior on the death of Dom Guéranger. It mistrusted his enlightened ideas, in which it detected liberalism.² The difficult task of restoring Silos was confided to him simply because among all his brethren there was no one else capable of performing it. Moreover, he had no illusions as to their opinion of him, nor as to their theological and political exaggerations. One day, when I was describing to him something touching my noviciate, he replied with his usual frankness: "Solesmes was an anti-Gallican reaction, and such a strong one that I cannot think how it came to continue."

Dom Guépin did his best to make my stay in his house interesting. He put me in charge of the monks, who fre-

¹ For further details about the history of Silos see pp. 169-70 of *La Bibliographie des Bénédictins de la congrégation de France* (Paris, 1906).

² Dom Guépin's liberalism was of no recent date. He was "the certain religious" to whom I referred in my *Notes sur les Profès de l'Abbaye de Solesmes*, article on Dom Mondeville, p. 40. I could not then give his name. This is the story: When, between 1860 and 1875, Dom Mondeville met Dom Guépin, who shared his views on many subjects, they would exchange by way of greeting two expressions constantly used in conversation by their brethren. One would say "Principles," the other would reply "Our opinions."

quently went out into the neighbourhood either on spiritual or temporal business. In this way I was introduced into monasteries, presbyteries, and families. We rode on mules. Like Don Quixote, we often breakfasted in the open air, waiting for the time when we might enter our host's house; we slept in a hall lit by a church lamp fixed to the middle of the door; we drank fraternally out of one glass which went round the table to each guest in turn, and which was always kept full so that we should all communicate with one another. The observations I was thus able to make were not always edifying for me as seminarist. For example, in numerous presbyteries I noticed young and pretty women, and even children, who seemed to belong to the house. I questioned the Father Prior as to the priests' morals. "They are all married," he replied laughing.

One of the most curious sights it was given me to see was what they called in the monastery a "children's fair." In our day it is easier to rebuild or even to build an abbey than to populate it. In the country still known as "Catholic Spain" the cultivated classes are no longer willing to give their children to the Church, and the young men of the lower classes prefer to its tranquil and servile life the risks of liberty or even the bitterness of poverty. Silos would have been without native monks had not Dom Guépin revived the ancient custom of his order of receiving children offered by their parents to the monastic life. But as it did not occur to the parents to bring their children, he had them asked for. Once or twice a year, priests, who were friends of his, announced from the pulpit to their parishioners that on such a day a Benedictine father would come and take the children whom their parents wished to dedicate to the service of God. The monks naturally undertook to defray all the expenses of their education. On the day fixed, the master of novices arrived, established himself in the house of some friend of the abbey, and examined the children who were brought to him. He made them recite prayers, questioned them on the catechism, ascertained whether they could read and write, and attempted to arrive at some opinion as to their intelligence. I have

seen on these occasions a whole house in the village filled with poor women overburdened with children asking that one at least should be taken. And I have seen them depart in grief at the rejection of their offspring whom they were too poor to feed. Children thus received were not definitively accepted. The intelligent Father Prior collected a large number to choose from, and spared no expense for the recruiting of his monastery.

My stay at Silos reknit the bonds between me and the congregation.

In the following November the Abbot, Dom Couturier, died. The monks of the Abbey of Solesmes and delegates from other monasteries of the congregation elected Dom Delatte as his successor. This choice certainly pleased me better than that of Dom Logerot would have done. I had pleasant memories of Dom Delatte, and especially of the monk whom he nominated Prior, Dom Cabrol. But I heard that the election had not taken place without considerable difficulty and many regrettable incidents. The rivalry between "the young" and "the old," far from diminishing, had become complicated by all sorts of questions. One of the new Abbot's first acts was to relegate the other candidate of "the young," who was his rival but also his former master, Dom Logerot, to a monastery which was considered the depository of Solesmes. To present myself for a second time as candidate in a congregation, where peace reigned less and less, did not seem to me prudent.

As I have already said, there existed a little preparatory monastic school for the monastery of Silos. Monks being scarce, two lay professors were employed there. I aspired to become the guest of Silos, continuing my studies there and teaching in the school in return for board and lodging. Later, when peace had returned to Solesmes, I would go back there; or, should circumstances point that way, I would become a monk at Ligugé, on which Silos directly depended. I had no desire to be permanently received into a Spanish monastery. It seemed to me that my life would be more useful if lived in my own country.

These considerations determined me to ask permission to enter the priesthood at the end of the academic year, in June, 1891, and not in December according to the diocesan custom. I should thus be able to begin the year at Silos, and my family would have the satisfaction of being present at my first mass. M. Baron and M. Letourneau approved of the plan. The Bishop, Mgr. Freppel, permitted me to be ordained in any neighbouring diocese, where there was an ordination on St. Peter's Day.

There was one at Nantes. On June 21, I went to the High Seminary of that town to take part in the preparatory retreat.

My short stay in that house did not contribute to my edification. The seminarists, even the candidates for holy orders, were exuberant at the thought of the approaching holidays, or of the completion of their studies. Their conversation revealed the absence of discipline. During their lessons they pretended to sleep, or to keep awake by taking snuff. Certainly the Angers Seminary was better than this.

In the little chapel of the Franciscan monastery of l'Esvière at Angers I celebrated my first mass with a joy indescribable. I should have liked to set out for Silos at once; but, on the advice of Dom Gaugain, I delayed in order to be present at the first meeting of the association of former Mongazon pupils. On the morrow of this festival—that is, on July 22—I took the road to Spain.

Dom Guépin, who was aware that I knew all about the affairs of Solesmes, was the first to speak to me of them, thinking I might be able to bring him further news. The situation filled him with anxiety. He foresaw great difficulties. "The Abbess," he said, "is an intelligent woman, but she is a woman, with the faults and possibly the maladies of her sex. It may be that she will soon be deprived of the administration of her convent."¹

A few days later I learned from monks that it would soon be a question of nominating an abbot of Silos. The election

¹ On conditions at Solesmes in that very year (1891) see the memoir of Dom Sauton, published in my *Grande Mystique*.

of the clever restorer of the ancient monastery would have appeared natural, but Solesmes opposed him, and even a few monks of Silos joyfully asserted that never would Dom Delatte choose Dom Guépin. Thus division reigned throughout the congregation, in the remote and small Spanish community as well as in the mother house.

At this crisis, on August 10, I received two letters. One, from a Mongazon professor, asked me, on the Superior's behalf, what truth there was in the rumour of my return to the Benedictines, and offered me the post of master, with the near prospect of becoming professor of languages. The other, from my mother, entreated me to accept the offer and return to Angers. My parents, who had gone to live there some years previously,¹ would be delighted to have me near them, and I should be of great assistance to them in my brother's education.

A week earlier, before receiving the confidences of the Prior and the monks, I should have believed that I should endanger my eternal salvation if I did not renew an honest attempt to live the life of which I had always dreamed. I should have sorrowfully but firmly refused my good mother's entreaty. In possession of what I now knew, I could not help asking, ought I to sacrifice a certain and regular position for a doubtful future and an insecure post? I sought advice. Dom Guépin and Dom Gaugain refused to give me their opinion, in order, they said, to leave me perfect freedom.

I have heard since that Dom Gaugain had received a letter from my mother, entreating him not to detain me. Another monk, Father Souben, advised me to accept the Superior of Mongazon's offer. Nevertheless, I hesitated.

It had been arranged with Dom Guépin that I should spend some time in a completely Spanish circle in order to perfect myself rapidly in the language, which I was beginning to speak. The Prior had found me a Burgos priest for master, and he expected me on August 14. The Prior

¹ See *ante*, p. 40.

advised me not to alter this arrangement, as I could make my decision at Burgos as well as at Silos.

On the appointed day I left the monastery at five in the morning, on a mule led by a servant, to take the coach some leagues away. When I arrived at the place the coach had gone. Dismissing my escort, I resolved to continue my journey on foot. As I was wearing my cassock, I thought it more seemly to ask the priest for hospitality than to lunch at an inn. The priest received me cordially, and made me share the frugal repast he was about to take. He would not let me go on my way that day, and kept me to dine and sleep. After our siesta we visited the church and the village. My host talked of Castile with pride, as if it furnished the whole of Europe with corn. Pointing to the Douro, he asked me whether French rivers were as broad. He confounded St. Benedict with St. Basil. I wondered whether he said his breviary, or whether he understood it.¹ He seemed to me to care more for natural science and history than for theology. He uttered the name of the astronomer Faye with admiration. His political tendencies were liberal.

The next morning I went to Burgos. The worthy priest, Don Isidore de Lope y Moral, who was to give me lessons, not being able to lodge me in his house, sent me as boarder to an artisan who was his neighbour. Henceforth the greater part of my time was spent in translation, conversations, visits, and excursions in the town and neighbourhood with my master.

I tried to talk with the priests, in order to discover their theological, political, and social ideas. One of those to whom Don Isidore introduced me was his cousin, M. Villada, brother or cousin himself of a Jesuit of that name, who was considered an authority on doctrine by the clergy of his

¹ How young I was to indulge in such conjectures! In 1920 a contemporary apologist whose books have enjoyed great success, Mgr. Albert Farges, published, with the *imprimatur* of Mgr. Baudrillart, a book on *Les Phénomènes Mystiques*, in which he mentions as French three amiable saints who were never in France—Stanislas Kostka, Louis de Gonzague, and Jean Berchmans. Could one have asked whether Mmgrs. Farges and Baudrillart said their breviary or understood it?

country. Don Isidore was cultured, reserved, and of a literary temperament. M. Villada's mind was audacious, inquiring, and deeply serious. Both lacked books. One day we had a conversation about the Bible. I expounded and defended the theories of interpretation maintained by François Lenormant, Mgr. Clifford, Cardinal Newman, and Canon Duilhé de Saint-Projet—theories which I had gathered from books and liberal apologetic reviews, notably *Le Bulletin Critique*. My two interlocutors, who knew nothing of all this, looked at each other and marvelled. Villada was always questioning me. When the time for parting came he exclaimed: "This young priest has more ideas than the whole Spanish clergy put together." Whatever the value of the Catholic authorities on whom I believed I could rely, it was anguish to me to find myself, in the dawn of my priesthood, more "advanced" than the Church of a great country, and I wondered whether I had not departed from the right path—whether, in reality, I was not or should not become "a stranger" in the Church.

On August 24, the Superior of Mongazon wrote to me that my nomination was settled: for a year I was to be usher in the children's department. During that year, with the assistance of the professor of modern languages, I was to study the elements of German, and I was to spend my next holidays in Germany. He added amiably: "You have still a month before you; if you can, make a short stay in Germany: it may be of use to you." The excellent man! I did not know a single word of German, and he invited me to traverse the whole of France to go and pass a few weeks in a country where I should understand nothing. Dom Gaugain, to whom I communicated this letter, wrote to me: "The reply of the Superior of Mongazon is worthy of an administrator; no one can deny it. I pity you for having fallen into such formidable hands."

As soon as my return was decided on I determined to profit from my journey as much as possible. On September 2, I started for the capital of Spain. I spent sixteen days there, visiting museums, the royal palace, the ministries,

the chambers, and making excursions. Madrid, a somewhat commonplace town perhaps, was the first great city I had known. I was filled with wonder. The admirable picture gallery made an indescribable impression on me. It was my first revelation of art. Velasquez entranced me. I was more pleased than edified. I had always heard the Catholic kings made out to have been as stalwart defenders of good morals as they were of the true faith. And yet these defenders of orthodoxy adorned their palaces with what seemed to me indecent paintings.

After having seen Madrid, although my purse was getting low, I followed the advice of friends and visited Toledo. The magnificent remains of Arab civilization revealed to me a new world, and suggested certain doubts to my mind of what my teachers termed "the transcendence of Christianity"—that is, of its incomparable superiority to all other religions, in actual results and in art as well as in doctrine. Had not this part of Spain been richer and more glorious under Islam than under the Catholic kings?

I submitted this idea to several Benedictines. They could not resolve my doubts. One of them, Dom Férotin,¹ specially versed in the history of this country since he became honorary member of the Madrid Historical Academy, even told me that Spanish historians, like Amador de Los Rios, held this view. It was not until fifteen years later that I discovered any satisfactory opinion on the matter. Here it is in the terms in which it was formulated :—

Not all that has been done in Mussulman countries is the fruit of Islam. This principle the profoundly learned historian of Mussulman Spain, M. Reinhard Dozy, applied with rare sagacity. Such distinctions are necessary unless history is to become a tissue of half-truths and misunderstandings.²

I returned to France on September 26. Passing Bayonne, I gave myself the pleasure of seeing the sea at Biarritz,

¹ He died in 1914. Dom Cabrol contributed a biographical article on him to the *Journal of Theological Studies*, April, 1915, and to *Le Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*. Cf. also *Le Bulletin de Saint Martin et de Saint Benoît*, November, 1915.

² Renan, *Discours et Conférences*, p. 405.

having already had my first glimpse of it at San Sebastian. I found it as before—blue, sparkling, wonderful.

On October 1, I took up my position in the college which I had left five years before. Twenty years later I told the learned historian of religions, M. Loisy, that my early travels had, in spite of the soundness of my beliefs, sowed the first doubts in my mind. He replied: "One has only to get out of one's hole to lose one's faith."

It may be so for the perspicacious. I had not been taught to be so. Nevertheless, what Charles Darwin wrote about his voyage to Tierra del Fuego—"I have always felt that to this voyage I owed the earliest discipline and education of my mind"—these words, if I may venture to compare small things to great, I may apply to my two excursions into Spain.

CHAPTER VII

UNDER-TEACHER

Usher — Holidays in Germany — M. Ledoyen, Superior of the Low Seminary — Under-teachers — Solesmes and the Inquisition — My First Objective Experience of Mystic Illusions.

October, 1891–July, 1894

AT the time when I entered the college as “under-teacher,” according to the term employed in the house—elsewhere the term “usher” is used—the pupils were classed in three divisions : juniors, middle, and seniors, each looked after by two ushers. The work of each began at noon, to end at noon the next day. Consequently, each one had full disposal of half of the day ; and, further, during his half-day’s work he had two hours’ leisure while his pupils were in the class-room. An under-teacher had, therefore, some time for his own work. It was certainly the only advantage of the post, but for me it was a very considerable advantage.

In the junior division my lot did not actually correspond to this theory. For some years, for reasons of economy, the division had had only one under-teacher. The work of the second was distributed among four—one usher and three professors of the junior classes, the sixth, seventh, and eighth. Older and more important than I, my colleagues dominated the division ; in the pupils’ eyes I too obviously counted for nothing.

During the year I occupied my leisure in learning German. At the end of the academic year I went—of course, at my own expense—to spend my holidays (August till September, 1892) on the other side of the Rhine, in the boarding-house of Bentheim, which had been highly recommended. The manager received too many young Frenchmen fresh from

college and disinclined to work for the visit to be really profitable to me.

On my return to Mongazon I was pleased to find the ordinary system had been reverted to, and that I had a colleague—that is, a second usher—an excellent companion, with whom I was always on the best of terms.

During the following vacation (August and September, 1893), sacrificing German conversation to the amusement of visiting the country, I travelled through Alsace and the grand duchy of Baden, and went down the river, the banks of which, especially in the neighbourhood of Kaiserswerth, are so majestic in their grandeur and tranquillity. A week in Belgium ended my holiday. These countries impressed me as industrious and prosperous, but in general as less attractive than Spain.

The divine light of the south, which glorifies everything, had attracted me. Moreover, among Latin peoples I have always felt as a brother; and Latin civilization, the heir of Greek, has always been for me the only civilization. I know no other. The efforts of the Germans to create a so-called civilization of their own seem to me to have missed fire. If they are civilized, it is because the old classical civilization has reached them through the Catholic Church and by means of French and Italian infiltrations into their western and southern provinces. Eastern Germans, being more remote, have partaken of these benefits only in a belated and feeble manner—one can see it to-day. During my two expeditions to the Rhine country I have sometimes heard it said: "I am a German; I am not a Prussian"; and then Prussians were described as coarse, brutal, insolent—the term "barbarian," even, was once used. Some people appeared to be afraid, above all things, of being taken for these barbarians, these half-civilized persons, these Prussians. They seemed to me to be entreating me to give them a certificate of politeness and courtesy—and, what was much more difficult, of grace and distinction. Unhappily, the strength of armies had come to be their ideal—and what armies! When I saw the German troops defiling for the

first time, the sharp sounds of the fife, the goose-step, the stiffness of the soldiers, the glances of brutal pride that they cast on every hand, inevitably reminded me of the invasion of the barbarians, designated with singular pride "the great Barbarian migrations."

I naturally made a point of closely observing the state of Catholicism. The faithful behaved solemnly at church, and were enrolled, each according to his category, in numerous brotherhoods and associations. Germanic culture and papal discipline are two despotic civilizations well calculated to understand one another. The few priests with whom I associated appeared to me fairly well educated and very orthodox. Both priests and laymen seemed to me very prejudiced against Protestantism. A barrier of prejudices separated them from their fellow citizens of the other confession.

From my two visits to Germany I brought away an impression of strength, of seriousness, and of conservatism.

On my return from my second visit the Superior nominated me professor of German to the lower classes—from the third to the sixth. It involved eight hours' additional work during the week. Consequently, my salary—of four hundred francs—was raised by fifty. Further, I was no longer required to accompany the pupils on their walks. My colleague performed that duty alone. But he had no more to do than the ushers of the upper and middle school. He had, therefore, no cause to complain. M. Ledoyen excelled in arrangements of that kind, and he founded them on adequate reasons.

In my article on "The Low Seminary of Mongazon" I have drawn his portrait only in such a way as I could sketch it shortly after his death and under episcopal censure.¹ Nevertheless, this portrait is more lifelike than the fine bust which adorns the monument on his tomb.

With the naïveté of a seminarist, and in spite of Dom

¹ Concerning this censure, see *post*, chap. ix. My article on M. Ledoyen brought me further information concerning him, through which I was able to make a better estimate of the man.

Gauguin's opinion of him, I expected to find in him a father-in-God, a protector, a counsellor, a friend. When I called upon him on my arrival, he gave me a list of my pupils and a copy of the rules. After that he never addressed me except to utter commonplaces. And I did not see him alone again until three months after I had entered on my work—that is, on December 19. Having heard that on that day I was, like him, going to the ordination, he did me the honour to offer me a seat in his carriage. I accepted with alacrity, thinking I should have the opportunity of a confidential talk. What was my disappointment! During the whole drive from the college to the cathedral, his lively conversation turned on the weather, the horses we met, and the houses being built. Of my pupils, of my work, not a word. Neither encouragement nor counsel. I feared lest this abstention from any serious talk might indicate some disapproval, and I asked my confessor, M. Baron, who was to see him in on New Year's Day, to question him about me. The Superior declared himself completely satisfied. He only asked one thing, and that was not to be involved in any trouble. Any other behaviour resulted in prompt dismissal, but the departure took place without any fuss, and always with a good recommendation to the bishop. He did not wish any of his professors to be suspected of having fallen short.

His ideas of education were singular. One might, he said, profess any science, provided one were fifteen pages in advance of the lesson one was giving. If this improvisation succeeded—that is to say, if his intervention to establish discipline was not required—the teacher was congratulated. But if the teacher failed, then M. Ledoyen did not hesitate to say: "How could he preserve order when he did not know what he was teaching?" And with a mathematical precision, utterly without feeling, he took measures to get rid of one so incapable. His opinions of his collaborators revealed a like absence of esteem. "There are only four professors here," he would say, "who are capable of making a speech on prize day." And once, when I asked him for a sum for the library, the care of which he had just confided to me, he

replied : " Here those who have a taste for study have no time, and those who have the time have not the taste." Accordingly, his generosity to the library was limited to having it floored as well as the rest of the college. Later, by dint of constant entreaty, I succeeded in squeezing out of him a small annual amount for the purchase of books and for binding.

He had attained, as if by chance, to a position which presupposes a certain erudition, but he never really approved of the studious life. According to him, one should never study more than was absolutely necessary to obtain such diplomas as the State insisted upon. The rest was nothing but vanity and weak-mindedness. According to him, a professor was worn out and ought to retire after fifteen years of work. When he kept his professors longer, it was only because he could not replace them. He dismissed several who had reckoned on dying in the college. " A Low Seminary," he used to say, " is not a house of retreat ; if the aged were to fall ill, it would be necessary to nurse them. One cannot undertake such a responsibility." Accordingly, he turned out a very worthy usher, M. Pierre Lefèvre, who asked for nothing better than to end his days in the house to which he had devoted more than thirty-four years of his life. It was true that he had nothing to leave.

Though very correct in his behaviour, M. Ledoyen could forget all his principles when it was his interest to do so ; or rather, one might say, he excelled in the art of adapting his conscience. Nevertheless, he constantly repeated, in a tone of the deepest conviction, that he would be answerable to God for the souls of all his professors and their pupils. Those who heard only his pious declamation and were not aware of his voluntary illusions might consider him a saint. He was, however, and that is no small matter, merely a clever administrator ; one specially skilled in the cultivation of vines, from which he derived a good income. The proprietor of vineyards, the son and grandson of well-to-do peasants, also vine cultivators, he had the rubicund complexion, the optimist's temperament, the clear thought, and the common sense of

those who produce the pleasant wine of Anjou. His limited erudition and knowledge did not designate him to be director of a college, but he took everything in good part, and never lost faith in himself. His strength lay in an imperturbable self-confidence.

The professorial body over which he presided was characterized by every kind of variety, from enlightened and pious priests to old fellows who were disillusioned, correct, or eccentric. From the point of view of letters and general knowledge, it seemed to me superior to the one I had known when I was a pupil. Directly or indirectly, the influence of the Catholic universities was making itself felt. I had, moreover, little to do with the professors. When I was not at work or shut up in my room to study I was reading in the town library. My walk thither served as recreation and as exercise. I hardly saw any one beyond the ushers of the other divisions, with whom I took my meals at a special table.

In arranging my recollections I have classified the various types of usher whom I knew either as pupil or professor. I refer to ushers only; there are six types: the saintly (two examples), the conventional (four examples), the idle (three examples), the convivial (eight examples), the sentimental (two examples), and, finally, the intriguing, the type that endeavours to rise to a professorship by every possible means, especially by flattering the Superior and spreading scandal concerning those whose post it seeks to occupy (two examples). Such a classification may be thought hardly flattering. Yet how many institutions can count two saints in so short a period of time? In any case, if there are so few estimable members of the staff, it is, in my opinion, because so few priests of distinction are appointed to these difficult posts, and because those who are appointed are not left to occupy them long enough. Each division ought to be supervised by an usher of mature age and considerable experience, and thus able to instruct his young colleague.

At Mongazon there was one priest, M. Pierre Lefèvre, who was content to remain an usher all his life. Mgr. Freppel

mentioned him with pride in the Chamber of Deputies,¹ but when the friends and admirers of this good man asked the bishop to appoint him honorary canon he replied that the mozetta was not for ushers. The other ushers at Mongazon stayed little longer than six years, and most of them less, so that the young beginner, fresh from the seminary, had generally no other guide than the experience of one who was but two or three years his senior, who knew little of education, and whose one desire was generally to get away as soon as possible to the sinecure of some curacy. If they wish to retain men of mature age in these difficult posts, diocesan administrators should reconcile their practice with their theory. They are constantly heard to proclaim that no work is more meritorious than an usher's. In practice they treat these ushers with less consideration than they would show to a watch-dog. It even happens that those who begin by being professors, especially if they are university graduates, assume, consciously or unconsciously, such a superior air towards those in a less exalted position that the latter are impelled to seek, as quickly as possible, a more democratic atmosphere in the parish ministry.

Any boredom and disillusionment I may have suffered in those days was amply compensated for by the dream I was to cherish for fifteen years of my life—a dream which was but the dawn of my greatest disillusion, my belief in the possibility of reconciling my religion with modern thought. There existed in France at that time a kind of idealist renaissance which was full of hope. Evidences of it were welcomed by Viscount Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé in an article which delighted me.² Every quarrel between the Church and the age seemed to me about to disappear. It was called the rally, the new spirit, the new apologetics. This movement, as I followed it in the self-interested exaggerations of the

¹ Speech during the debate on the Secondary Education Bill, July 12, 1882 : "In one of my institutions I have an usher who has occupied this post for twenty-five years. He is a model master, because for long years he has been ground in the mill of this thankless and difficult calling. If only it were so everywhere !"

² *Les Cigognes* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, January 15, 1892, reprinted in the book entitled *Heures d'Histoire*.

Catholic Press, intoxicated me. I experienced a kind of renewal of life which I was to describe ten years later when I began to learn the lessons of this phase in my history.¹ The kind of liberalism towards which I was insensibly being borne originated not only in the generous impulses of my youth, but in a reaction against the exaggerations in the midst of which I was living, and particularly against that bigoted credulity frequently described as "clerical." From this clericalism my worthy Superior himself was not exempt. He was one of the earliest and most confirmed victims of Léo Taxil's mystification. He would tell his pupils, at their devotional readings, that the devil presided in person over the meetings of Freemasons. My catholic faith in the devil was perfectly sound—at Solesmes I had even known a monk who was possessed by him—but I believed that at the present day the devil's chief skill lay in concealing himself, even in making people deny him, so that had he appeared in a lodge all the Freemasons would have been converted to worship the good God. Thus it seemed to me that Freemasons were grossly misjudged, especially as I happened to know some who were excellent people. Twenty years later I was to read in the diary of Father Hyacinthe Loyson that, when he was priest at Saint-Sulpice, in Paris, he had appealed in one of his sermons to the Freemasons, "the Freemasons of the temple of the future," to come and join with the clergy in building it.² If I had preached in 1893, I should have been capable of equal naïveté.

Absorbed in my work and possessed by religious enthusiasm, I lived what was almost a monk's life. From time to time I returned to contemplate my old ideal, either at Solesmes or in the monastery of Glanfeuil de Saint-Maur-sur-Loire, where several religious, whom I had known during my noviciate, resided. Alas for my ideal! The division between "the young" and "the old," between Cecilians and anti-Cecilians, was growing more and more bitter. "The young" or the Cecilians made an immoderate use of their

¹ In my book *l'Américanisme*, pp. 195-224. See also my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, pp. 1-61.

² See my *Vie du Père Hyacinthe*, vol. i, chap. iii, p. 70.

power, regardless of convention and even of common sense. For instance, the Abbot and the Abbess, a monk of high standing and the Prioress, all set out together on a long journey to prepare the foundation of two monasteries, heedless of the scandal that would be created by two such couples of travellers. I beheld the approach of a storm which I had anticipated ever since 1888. When it burst, it was much more scandalous and much more resounding even than I had anticipated.

Towards the middle of April, 1893, the Holy Office took severe disciplinary measures at Solesmes. The Abbot Dom Delatte (who had been summoned to Rome) was forbidden to return to France, or to communicate with his monks, and was ordered—at any rate, for a time—to live at Subiaco. The Prior, Dom Cabrol, was deposed; all relations between the monastery and the convent at Solesmes were forbidden. The nuns were placed under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the diocese; for confessors and almoners they were to have certain diocesan missionaries who were connected with a church several miles away. The oldest abbé of the congregation, Dom Gauthey, was appointed temporary administrator of Solesmes and Superior General of the congregation.¹

These measures were merely provisional. The Holy Office was suing the Abbot and Abbess on points of doctrine. But the Benedictines, who numbered among them two princesses, obtained the intervention of the Queen of Spain and the Emperor of Austria on their Superior's behalf. For the canonical solution of the matter Leo XIII substituted a diplomatic solution. He decided that the Abbot and the Abbess should continue at the head of their communities; only they should be *ad nutum Sanctæ Sedis*—that is to say, if any further complaints were made either of their opinions or their administration, they should be deposed without further trial.

Before this decision had been bruited abroad a leading newspaper, the *Matin*, published, on November 13, 1893, a

¹ For these matters see my *Grande Mystique*.

violent and offensive article on the Solesmes affair. In reply to the *Matin*, and at the instigation of a Solesmes Benedictine, Edouard Drumont contributed to the *Libre Parole* of November 17 and 18 a eulogy of the Abbot and Abbess, with a violent attack on the two monks who had denounced them to the Holy Office. The Abbot of Ligugé, Dom Bourigaud, who was then at Paris, flatly contradicted Drumont in the *Libre Parole* of the following day, the 19th.

These incidents moved me more than I can describe. I believed in all the Church taught with regard to the supernatural. My knowledge of history and psychology was still rudimentary ; I was therefore incapable of understanding the meaning and the bearing of the mystical drama I was witnessing, and concerning which I was as yet ill informed. I considered the Abbess a saint, although having something in common with the illuminati ; and the Abbot a saint, although a crank. The only objection I saw to the spiritual friendships of monks and nuns was the time wasted over interminable correspondence or long conversations at the grating. The Abbess, referring to the tribulations befalling her, said : " We are now living a page in the life of saints." I believed it, and in the sense which she intended.

Possessing good friends on both sides, I determined to maintain complete neutrality, and to await in peace the so-called " judgment of the Church." The Pope had sent an apostolic inspector to Solesmes, and to him I might have confided many stories. I did not return to the Abbey as long as the trial lasted. I defended the congregation as well as I could in conversation and in my letters, as a son tries to settle a quarrel between his father and mother.

The *Matin* article and Dom Bourigaud's letter distressed me—the one as creating a scandal, the other as a mistake likely to hinder any peaceable settlement of the affair.

A certain Benedictine of the Cecilian faction was constantly trying to bias me in favour of his party, and endeavouring to give an orthodox interpretation to anything in the Abbess's mysticism that might have seemed to me regrettable and alarming. I believed him when he asserted that the *Matin*

article had been written by Dom de la Tremblaye, and when he, in accordance with Drumont's articles, maintained that the Holy Office had condemned Dom Delatte without hearing him. He asked me to write to Drumont and congratulate him on his intervention, and send him additional information which he gave me, and which I learned later was not accurate. I wrote to Drumont with all the greater eagerness because in those days his behaviour during the Panama affair made me regard him as a lover of justice. I also regarded myself as one. The mystical aberrations of the Abbess did not justify the way in which certain of her adversaries presumed to attack her. The "conceptions" and "maternities" in which she had rejoiced had been merely spiritual phenomena.

A few days later I was greatly comforted to learn that Dom Delatte had been restored to be head of his Abbey. It is true that this restoration was accompanied by a communiqué published by the Bishop Le of Mans, the tenour of which—inspired by Rome, so it was said—presented some ambiguity. My Benedictine very kindly explained the text to me in the sense of my wishes—that is to say, of his party. His explanations would have satisfied me fully had I not learned that on November 22 the Holy Office, in agreement with Leo XIII, had summarized the mystical theses of the Abbess in five propositions, and that in December the monks and nuns of Solesmes had been commanded by the Pope to sign a formulary disavowing them.

On December 30, taking advantage of my brief New Year's holiday, I went to congratulate Dom Delatte and Dom Cabrol on a return for which I had hardly ventured to hope.

I found the monks in a strange state of unnatural excitement. If "the young," "the Cecilians," assumed a victorious air, the "old," "the Anti-Cecilians," were wondering anxiously what kind of a life these triumphant adversaries would lead them. On both sides many were furious at having been obliged to disavow errors which, they said, they had never shared. All were sadly aware that the reputation for orthodoxy of an Abbey once proud to be known as *Locus irreprehensibilis* was ended for ever.

I, who was still attached to Solesmes, regarded the compromise imposed by Leo XIII as a happy solution. I was prepared to hope that the tribulations of the Father Abbot would serve but as the noviciate to a glorious reign. Alas ! Dom Delatte and his flatterers wished to make believe that he had triumphed all along the line. Their adversaries refused to accept such a pretension. All the discussions began over again. It so happened that I was present at them. As I could easily go to Saint-Maur, and as I often saw monks from Solesmes who were passing through Angers, I became a kind of liaison officer between those two monasteries, the Superiors of which continued at war.

The Prior of Saint-Maur, Dom Chamard,¹ had regarded Dom Delatte's deposition as final ; and, as nearly all his monks sided with the deposed Abbot, he had treated them as rebels. Disconcerted by the Abbot's return, he considered it to be a merely provisional measure, with the object of killing the scandal ; and he said that later, when the right time came, Dom Delatte would discreetly and definitively retire into obscurity. The expression of this opinion caused him in his turn to be treated by nearly all his monks as a rebel against his Superior General.

Dom Chamard took care that there should be as little communication as possible between his community and that of Solesmes. At this juncture the Sub-Prior of St. Maur corresponded with Dom Delatte through me.

It was not long before Dom Chamard began to suspect this. My arrival used to throw him into a bad temper ; but, although he could be volcanic, he always received me graciously. My work as liaison officer did not last longer than four months. In May, 1894, Dom Chamard was sent to Normandy to preside over the monastery of Saint-Wandrille. Peace returned to Saint-Maur, but in the other monasteries discord long continued. The spectacle of such dissensions cured me of any wish to enter a religious congregation.

¹ See my *Notes sur les Profès de Solesmes*, the article on Dom Chamard and on Dom Joseph Bourigaud ; also my *Controverse de l'Apostolicité* and my *Lettre à Dom Chamard*.

CHAPTER VIII

PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

My Nomination as Professor—My Travels in England (1896-7)—I Read Newman—I Change My Superior—My History Lectures—The Rally.

July, 1894–April, 1901

ALTHOUGH I was professor of German for the lower classes, I had relatively few opportunities and very little time to render myself perfect in that language, and it was not without a certain apprehension that I saw the time approaching when I should have to teach it throughout the college. Fearing lest I should not be ready, and anxious to overcome the difficulties of this perplexing idiom once and for all, I asked my Superior to allow me to spend a year beyond the Rhine. It would be easy to fill my post of usher and of professor in the lower college.

In October, 1894, I laid this plan before the bishop, Mgr. Mathieu, afterwards cardinal and member of the French Academy. The prelate received me graciously, and granted my request provided I could obtain the consent of M. Ledoyen. He refused absolutely. I pleaded with the bishop. "My child," he replied, "your Superior insists that he needs you. It does you great credit. For there are so many professors of whom he is eager to get rid!"

Monseigneur did not like my Superior. M. Ledoyen, on his part, had all sorts of plans in his head. Some of them were carried out that year. After the prize-giving he wrote me the following letter:—

Vichy, July 26.

MY DEAR ABBÉ,—I should have liked to have seen you before leaving; but you were not there.

Although my lips were sealed, I should have opened them to tell you definitely that you have been appointed professor of history in

addition to being professor of German to the lower school. M. Bellanger is taking the place of the Abbé Verdier, who is to be Superior of Saint-Louis of Saumur.

Do not speak of this as long as nothing is said by those who are with you. I think you will be able to wait for my return before saying anything. If you go to Germany, you can be discreet without any trouble.

As all these changes are made through the Bishop, the Bishop must be left to disclose what is done when he wishes.

Good-bye, dear Monsieur Houtin.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

AND. LEDOYEN.

I was far from expecting such an appointment, seeing that M. Bellanger had been appointed professor of history only a year before. It had never been hinted to me that his post would soon be vacant, and that there was any idea of giving it to me. Consequently, I was not in any way ready to occupy it. I therefore determined to give up going to Germany, and to spend my vacation with my parents preparing for this new work.

At the end of August, through the influence of the Prior of Solesmes, Dom Cabrol, I accepted a month's tutorship at Solesmes. I gave three hours' lessons in the morning and one in the evening to a young boy. I lodged in a house in the village, and had my meals in the monks' refectory. Their splendid library was placed at my disposal. During the holidays of the following year I spent a month in the same way, and in 1896 two months.

I began my history course after the long vacation of 1894. As professor of rhetoric to pupils in their second and third years, I had to teach eight hours during the week. As I have said already, the Superior had added eight hours' German lessons to my week in return for a rise in salary of fifty francs a year. When appointing me professor of history he continued to give me this extra work while suppressing the increase in salary, so that I found myself with half as much work again as my predecessors had had and no compensation. For this great administrator no economies were too small.

On Holy Thursday, in 1896, while performing my devotions in the different churches of the town, I caught a child's disease very prevalent at that time—namely, whooping cough. When the pupils returned after the Easter holidays the doctor banished me from the school-room, with the order not to resume my duties until thirty days after my last fit of coughing. How could I occupy myself during what seemed likely to be a prolonged exile? The precincts of the college were about to be clothed in all their spring beauty, and, as M. Ledoyen remarked to me, nowhere could I find a more lovely park. I felt all the more inclined to take advantage of it since the Superior urged me to do so. But, in reality, he thought very differently. To every one he was saying: "M. Houtin will not understand that he cannot stay here without endangering the health of the pupils. I do not know how to persuade him to leave." Finally, he told the steward to dismiss me. The latter, who did not want me to hold him responsible for my departure, frankly told me of the double game the Superior was playing. It did not surprise me. I returned to my parents' home on April 19.

As my cough continued, I soon saw that I might not be able to return to the college before the close of the academic year. The doctor prescribed change of air. I decided to travel. The Superior having changed his plans for the teaching of German, I no longer contemplated returning to Germany. I resolved to go to England.

My departure was postponed until the beginning of June on account of my sister's wedding.

On my way to London, by Havre, Southampton, and Winchester, I stopped at the Benedictine priory of Farnborough, founded by the widow of Napoleon III, the Empress Eugénie, near a church built by her for the tombs of her husband, her son, and herself. In order to care for them worthily and to make sure of masses, the Empress appealed first to the Premonstrants. She asked for three priests, and gave them an endowment which was enough for six. But the arrangement did not turn out as she wished. The fathers caused a scandal. And the Empress, taking advantage of

there being a released convict among them, cancelled the contract, and threatened them with a lawsuit, on the ground that she had been misled, and that the persons she had dealt with had been other than she believed them. Having thus got rid of the Premonstrants, she persuaded the Abbey of Solesmes to people her little colony.

I visited it. It consisted of five fathers, who were choristers, including the Superior, the former Sub-Prior of Saint-Maur. For June 11, the day of the octave of the Holy Sacrament, he had arranged a procession and a tea-party. It was the first reception in the monastery. I was able to enjoy the spectacle. A score of priests and religious from the neighbourhood had been invited. The street altar showed how competent was the Superior in such matters. But the English priests bore themselves ill during the ceremony, and still more at the tea-party. Many of them swallowed no less than six cups of liquid—necessary, indeed, to wash down all the cakes they devoured. Like my bishop, Mgr. Mathieu, I could henceforth boast of “having seen the best stomachs of Catholicism at work.” All these ecclesiastics spoke French, some of them very correctly. They discussed chiefly the question, so much to the fore in those days, of the validity of Anglican orders. None of them were in favour of it. They all seemed inclined to think that the Pope would bury the controversy in a diplomatic silence. The event showed them to be wrong. Leo XIII declared the orders invalid.

When the guests had gone, most of them on bicycles, the priory, which had been lively for the first time, relapsed, not into the tranquillity of a Benedictine monastery, but into the icy silence of a Carthusian house. To prolong my stay there would have been to waste my time. Consequently, after a few excursions in the neighbourhood, I removed to surroundings which were completely English.

London priests are accustomed to take a month's holiday, and, failing colleagues of their own diocese, they are pleased that Irish or French priests should take their places. They lodge and board them free in return for two masses on Sunday

and evening prayers once or twice a week. I found such a post with a priest of East London, at Canning Town, where I stayed from June 23 until August 13. The remainder of my holidays I spent at Solesmes in my former tutorship.

M. Ledoyen's idiosyncrasy again revealed itself in these circumstances. He tried to make me return for the prize-giving at the end of July. Shortly before my illness I had agreed to make the usual speech on that day, and in the beginning of my enforced holiday I had written it, submitted it to the Superior, and obtained his approval. From England I wrote suggesting that it might be read by another professor, if neither of my colleagues had time to write one of his own. The Superior insisted on my return, and all the more unreasonably seeing that he had diminished my modest salary by two hundred francs because of the four months during which I had been prevented from teaching. There being no reason why I should hide this proceeding, I made it known. M. Ledoyen appeared somewhat piqued. He explained that the college could not bear the expense of an illness, and advised me to apply to the diocesan fund for the assistance of aged or infirm priests, to which I had subscribed. It granted me two hundred francs, a sum much less than the expense of my keep since April. As for the speech I had written, the Superior, who never wasted anything, made me deliver it the next year.

That year, 1897, my holidays were again spent in England. I stayed about three weeks in the Farnborough monastery. Dom Cabrol had become Prior until such time as he should be Abbot. He tried to transform it into a regular hive of work ; and he did not gain much credit thereby. On March 2, 1914, by command of Pius X, the Cardinal de Lai, prefect of the holy consistorial congregation, publicly censured a dissertation by the most hard-working of his monks, Dom Leclerc, and blamed Dom Cabrol himself for having allowed it to be printed.

After leaving Farnborough I spent a month in London, with the priest of Wapping, under the same conditions as in the previous year.

On September 14, 1897, I was present at the festival which commemorated the thirteenth centenary of the arrival in England of its apostle, the monk Augustine. It was less a pious commemoration than a proud manifestation intended to humble the Protestants. The organization of the religious ceremony celebrated at Ebbsfleet left much to be desired. The procession was a rabble. The lack of dignity extended even to the leader, who, although dressed as a Roman prelate, walked with his hands in his pockets. The luncheon which followed, and which was held in a large Ramsgate hotel, was even more tumultuous. Those who were at the first sitting-down took the tables by assault, and gulped down everything they could lay hands on. Those who came after found nothing left. I write without any personal bitterness, for I had the luck to find myself carried in by the crowd who occupied the dining-room first.

Short as were my two sojournings on the other side of the Channel, they furnished me with ample material for profitable reflection. At the seminary and in the Catholic Press—the only one that I then read—the whole English nation was represented as returning to Catholicism. It was even alleged that Queen Victoria, having been secretly converted, used to come every year to celebrate Easter on the Côte d' Azur. What I saw in England sufficed to show me how ill founded were such rumours. In the country, in England, Roman Catholics of English origin are very few, and they are almost all poor. In the towns they are generally Irish or descendants of Irish. The movement begun by John Henry Newman, concerning which I persistently inquired, was then on the wane, I was told. Many Irish priests asserted that England would never be Catholic; and the idea seemed to please them, since in consequence the English were condemned to eternal fire.

On the other hand, if the English were not being converted, it seemed to me that by associating with them the Irish were losing their faith. At Canning Town and Wapping, where they formed the majority of the so-called faithful, the churches were empty of adults. Nevertheless,

the Irish were said to be Catholics, though their religion seldom appeared, save in political coteries, which at election time waged war against the customs of Old England and the privileges of the Established Church. Apostasy among priests was not rare. In an excursion I made to Forest Gate I was shown a Franciscan monastery, the Superior of which, a man of considerable distinction—Father Anthony, Mr. Joseph McCabe—had recently left the Church.¹

The impression of strength, energy, and prosperity made upon me by the English people suggested to my mind a problem of a very special kind. If the Roman Church is the only fount of truth, the only dispenser of the Holy Sacraments—that is, the means by which God bestows grace to do good and avoid evil—how comes it that this heretical and schismatic nation has been able to become so prosperous? I submitted this difficulty to a Farnborough monk, Dom Férotin. After reminding me that the ways of God are past finding out, this religious, who was certainly intelligent and sensible,² gave me the following reply, which was also, so he told me, that of Dom Guéranger: "The English receive in this world the reward of their virtues and a blessing for anything they may have preserved of Christianity, but they are more severely treated in the other world. Catholics, on the contrary, more tried here below, find their reward in heaven."

This explanation, which could not easily be verified, and

¹ He later became a leading member and lecturer of the Rationalist Press Association.

² I have kept a dozen of his affectionate letters (1895-1900). As he was well versed in historical criticism, I think I may reproduce here a passage from one of his letters, which shows that in his opinion my information as to his congregation was not inaccurate. He wrote to me from Farnborough on August 19, 1896: "Might I without indiscretion ask you for news of Solesmes? During your stay here you told me so many things I did not know, and you are able to obtain information from such reliable sources, that I do not hesitate to ask you to render me this little service. Do not be afraid: domestic, literary, or personal news, all will be received with pleasure." It was very useful to the subordinates of D. Delatte to know how the wind blew in his quarter. Thus Dom Marais wrote to me in a similar strain on October 20, 1898, asking for advice: "I have great confidence in your information and your opinion, and I believe it had better be sooner than later, if you will. It would permit me to steer my little barque without disturbing any one and without arousing any suspicion."

which was hardly worthy of the divinity, did not go far to satisfy me.¹

The Anglican clergy whom I chanced to meet made as favourable an impression on me as the rest of the nation. They seemed to me to be well-bred, to be *gentlemen*. One of them, an ardent ritualist, eager to show what he called "Anglo-Catholicism" in all its purity, gave me an introduction to an Anglican community, "The Society of St. John the Evangelist," often called "The Cowley Fathers," after the Oxford suburb in which they are established. I found them in possession of a liturgy as dignified and almost as beautiful as that of Solesmes. The congregation joining in the singing of the services gave them an air of sociability totally absent from a monastic choir. They used the Gregorian chant; and the language of the English Bible, with its particles and its numerous monosyllables, seemed to lend itself very nobly to public worship, and to be much more adaptable to it than French.

One of the oldest members of the community, Father G. Congreve, took me to a little convent of Anglican nuns and to the parish school. As I read the inscription running round the walls of the schoolroom and serving as a frieze, "*Credo unam sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam et apostolicam*," I imagined myself at Port Royal; and the aged man who accompanied me, so kind, so simple, and so distinguished, seemed to me one of the solitaries living in the shadow of the great abbey. For the first time in my life I felt that holiness existed outside my Church.

Cowley was probably the most mystical institution in the Church of England. My experience of the Catholic clergy was less edifying. The secular clergy consists of English and Irish priests. The former, few in number and of whom consequently I saw but one or two specimens, appeared to me

¹ Nevertheless, it is in the true tradition. For instance, it is found coming from the pen of the venerable Henri-Marie Boudon when travelling in Protestant Germany, much more prosperous than France. "Behold in what manner God treats men who have rebelled against him; he gives them as their portion the delights of life.....Oh! how terrible to be at one's ease in this world" Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux*, vol. vi, p. 261.

dignified and sensible. The others, generally unbalanced, mocking, choleric, vain, seemed to regard themselves less as missionaries in a Protestant country than as chaplains of their fellow countrymen in a hostile land. Scorn and hatred of everything English possessed them. The manner in which they expressed themselves on the serious questions of the day—the validity of Anglican orders and the reunion of the Churches—revealed a hereditary implacable animosity. One day, when I was trying to make one of them talk about the ritualists, all he could tell me was: “Those pigs practise celibacy.”

Of the regular clergy I hardly saw any but Jesuits and Benedictines. The former appeared to me very conscious of their own merit. Is it necessary to add that, outside their residences, all these reverend gentlemen who had taken the vow of poverty dressed and behaved like rich members of the upper middle class? One could recognize the Benedictines as priests by their round collar. But the Jesuits did not wear it; and sometimes they did not even wear black. They looked like respectable laymen.

Whatever influence these impressions may have had on the ultimate development of my mind, they were less important than that which I derived from reading the works of Cardinal Newman. He was one of the authors whom M. Letourneau had made me read in the seminary.¹ He had lent me his *Apologia* and a book by the Abbot of Madaune on *The Renaissance of Catholicism in England*, a book which had troubled me indescribably. When I found the Cardinal's works in the library of the priest of Canning Town, to whom they had been presented by one of the devout, and who had never opened them, I fell upon them, and, instead of employing my traveller's leisure in reading newspapers and novels which would have been more helpful to me in the acquisition of colloquial English, I read the thirty volumes,

¹ See *ante*, chap. v, p. 56. I had the opportunity of giving my opinion of Newman in the English periodical *Everyman*, Oct. 25, 1912, p. 53, and in *La Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 1913, vol. lxxvii, pp. 81–3; 1920, vol. lxxxi, p. 85; and 1921, vol. lxxxiv, p. 289.

and I re-read several times the *Apologia*, the *Two Essays on Miracles*, and the *Grammar of Assent*. Of the *Apologia*, so beautifully written, I will say nothing save that it moved me to tears, and that it long filled me with affection for the author.

The work on Miracles is very strange, as a famous "Newmanian," the Abbé Brémond, has well explained :—

Barely discernible shades of terminology artfully obscure the necessary distinctions between science and faith. The effusions of the believer mingle with the discussions of the historian, while the bewildered reader is puzzled to know what is required of him—whether to open his eyes or close them, whether to pursue a scientific investigation or blindly to repeat a creed.

To complete our bewilderment, Newman devotes the second half of his book to a minute examination of a certain number of miracles. He chooses nine. According to him, there is every reason to believe that these nine miracles are proof against all the assaults of a critic. They are typical miracles, which, once examined upon sound evidence, will aid us to admit, in the mass at least, other miraculous stories which rest on a less firm foundation. For it must not be forgotten that this is the author's object. He wants his book to render the reader, not credulous, but disposed to believe in a number of miraculous interventions, and to stimulate our devoutness by these beautiful stories. Once our critical sense is satisfied by the discussion of these nine typical miracles, we can dismiss science and approach ecclesiastical history in a manner which behoves a believer—that is, in a spirit of edification. Very good ; but at least let those miracles rest upon a foundation of granite, for if we felt the slightest doubt of the miracles that you have yourself chosen and discussed what belief could we give to the others? Our faith in miracles is in your hands. Satisfy us with certitude.

You do not yet know Newman and the scorn he sometimes evinces for all science. You wish to know what he thinks of the nine miracles—first make it clear which of the two Newmans you are addressing. The believer? He admits the nine miracles. The critic, the historian, the scholar? As for him, after having re-read him several times, I really do not know. See if you will be more fortunate than I.

.....The reader, even when he is thus warned, in spite of himself opens wide his eyes in the sure and certain hope of a fine miracle, as clear as day ; and when, his work completed, our guide, restraining our impatient eagerness, tells us quietly : "*It may be*, yea, perhaps it is a miracle, but don't go and use it as an argument against unbelievers ; they would swiftly pull it to pieces ; a miracle indeed, but only for you who believe already, a miracle of devoutness, so to speak"—then,

I exclaim, there is nothing that holds good, I grow impatient, I murmur, I close the book, I think aloud or to myself, I say: "If he, a man of science, has found nothing more striking in the miraculous history of the early centuries, the Gibbons and the Renans may not have been far wrong when they jeered at our ancient legends and made short work of the supernatural."¹

For me Newman's book on Miracles was, to use Brémont's words, "a manual of scepticism."² It is one of the books which have most powerfully influenced my life. It marks a date, a stage; and for this reason I have referred to it at such length. It entirely destroyed my faith in the great miracles of Christian antiquity. As for Biblical miracles, they seemed to me vouched for by the inspiration of the holy books; I placed them in a category apart as inviolate.

Newman always expresses himself with such unction, and I was so entranced by the insinuating sophisms of his *Grammar of Assent*, that at the time I did not realize the true meaning of the lesson he had taught me. Neither did I notice all that was disintegrating in certain pages of that Grammar. Nevertheless, they remained in my mind, and by the sentimental strain they introduced into my Catholicism they softened the painful shocks which were to result later from the development of my critical faculty and from my progress in the historical sciences of which I was considered a master, since the irony of fate had made me a professor of history. From 1896 I was a disciple of Newman; heretical, perhaps, but in all security and simplicity. Had not the Pope rewarded his work with the purple? His theories seemed to me to inspire a review founded in the beginning of this very year, to which I had immediately become a subscriber, on Dom Cabrol's advice, and which I read with fervour—*La Revue d'Histoire de Littérature Religieuse*. Professors of Catholic universities, who were said to be very learned, like the Abbé Duchesne and the Abbé Lejay (later members of the Institut), priests who were considered eminent, like le Père Baudrillart and le Père Griselle, were con-

¹ Brémont, *Newman, Essai de Biographie Psychologique* (1906), pp. 126-31.

² *Ibid.*, p. 131.

tributors. In my provincial naïveté I was far from suspecting that the three priests¹ who had founded it had lost their faith in Catholicism and in Christianity.

The academic year of 1897 opened under curious conditions—those of a singular ecclesiastical team, a co-directorship. M. Ledoyen's health had become so feeble that he could no longer act as principal. He felt it himself, and mourned over it incessantly. The Bishop, the kind Mgr. Baron (who had replaced the volatile Mathieu), instead of treating him as he himself would have treated any of his professors—that is to say, insisted on their retirement—appointed as his co-director the professor of rhetoric, M. Jean Baptiste Goupil. Now, M. Ledoyen appeared afraid of having him as his successor, considering him ill fitted for the post. He would have preferred one of his friends, the Abbé Charles Marchand. There was no trickery, no device, that he did not employ to show M. Goupil, who was called "Monsieur le Directeur," that he was still professor of rhetoric, and that his new title gave him no claim on the future. As for M. Goupil himself, he was too intelligent and too loyal not to behave with perfect correctness. He had not to wait long for the succession. M. Ledoyen died in April, 1898.

The new Superior had been one of the most brilliant pupils of the college.² He was always at the top of his class. The Academician, M. René Bazin, belonged to the same class, and by dint of constant hard work succeeded in coming out third. Having taken his degree of licentiate of letters, M. Goupil returned to the college as professor of rhetoric. He was my master, and to him I largely owe my love for clear thought. The purity of his taste saved me from falling into the romanticism which attracted me in my youth. The sarcasm that he pitilessly heaped on what he called sheer nonsense remains impressed on my memory, and never ceases

¹ MM. Loisy, Lejay, and Margival. For Lejay, who died in 1920, membre de l'Institut, see article, by M. Salomon Reinach, in *La Revue Archéologique*, and Larousse, *Mensuel Illustré* for 1920. Margival, university graduate and priest at Saint-Honoré d'Eylau, left the Church about 1896, and died in 1914.

² His funeral sermon, preached by the Abbé J. M. Delahaye (Angers, Société Anonyme des Éditions de l'Ouest; 1923), may be read with profit.

to awaken in the presence of all kinds of bad poetry, or poetry that is commonplace, metaphysical, theological, or mystical. When I became his colleague we were not long in becoming intimate, although he was a man who confined himself to small groups of friends. The delicacy of his nature and the breadth of his culture had made him a Liberal Catholic.

Great historical and biblical questions had a fascination for him. But he was quick to realize how dangerous studies are for faith. He endeavoured to find distraction from such high matters either in making fun of one of our colleagues, M. Préaubert, who was a curious blend of shrewdness and kindness, or in interminable card-playing. Sometimes he would relate the misfortunes of one of his former fellow-pupils, Chabert, a doctor at Seiches, who had not cared for whist and bridge. While his comrades were seeking recreation in cards and other pastimes, the student Chabert, who still went to mass every Sunday, would seek his in reading the great writers of France. After having methodically been through all those of the seventeenth century, he attacked those of the eighteenth—Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire. Here he lost his faith. M. Goupil told all this quite seriously as a proof of the danger of reading and the superiority of cards. He had rigorously limited his own curiosity. Although he had been a professor of rhetoric for nearly twenty years and had lectured on *Les Lettres Persanes* every year, he had never read them. His opinions on them were formed according to the views of up-to-date critics,¹ of Emile Faguet especially.

In the evening I sometimes played whist with M. Goupil and M. Préaubert, but generally I read, and that was why M. Goupil told me the story of Chabert. Nevertheless, I had to read in order to prepare for my classes.

My teaching involved hard work. Possibly my opinions of my masters may be judged severe; possibly apologists, seeking for means of refutation, will be glad one day to

¹ See *ante*, p. 13.

find adverse criticisms of my teaching. They will be found ; or perhaps, even, they will be encouraged. But my published works will show that I have conscientiously cultivated the kind of studies that my Superiors imposed on me ; and I hope that many of my former pupils in whom I have inspired a taste for history will do me honour. Moreover, I, like my masters, may plead extenuating circumstances. Like them an amateur professor, I never received any special training. I belong to a period and a world to which these preliminaries were entirely unknown. Ecclesiastical Superiors, when they made nominations, invoked the grace of God.

Without in any way neglecting to cultivate my pupils' memories and to prepare them for their matriculation, I made a point of developing their intelligence and their critical faculty. I aroused thoughts in them which I wish had been aroused in me when I was their age. By lending them good books, historical and geographical albums, and by giving them maps to draw, I provided them with pleasant and profitable occupations, which I had lacked in my youth. I even ventured to change certain text-books, used from time immemorial, abounding in apocryphal tales, bristling with the names of unknown persons and with unimportant dates, to the serious detriment of general ideas and of the history of intellectual and social evolution.

Some of my former pupils told me fifteen years later, during the Great War, that my teaching was imperialist. It may have been. I have never doubted the future of my country. I have never accepted the theories of those who would justify its effacement. I belong to that category of professors of history and geography who, with the text-books of Marcel Dubois, of Schrader and Gallouédec, made young people love and dream of a greater France, strong and colonizing. Those professors have, I believe, helped to form the morale of the generation which heroically resisted the German invasion. It goes without saying that in the expansion of France it was our ideas of reason, of liberty, and of progress that occupied me more than merely economic advantages.

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A number of my pupils, I know, appreciated my teaching. I cannot say as much for my colleagues. They found it strange. For many of them history was nothing but a series of events proceeding from the free will of God and of his saints. To study it scientifically, as I was trying to do in certain books they saw me reading, deserved to be called scepticism—a word which was constantly on their lips. I used to put on one side the anecdotes which they considered of the first importance, and which they called great traditions of the faith, such as Saint Mary Magdalen's arrival in Provence or the exclamation of the Emperor Julian: "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean." Though I never forgot that I was professor in a Low Seminary and that I must avoid offending the weak, they doubted my orthodoxy. Several professors in the upper school, who taught apologetics and Church history, had learnt nothing on these subjects since they had left the seminary. We contradicted one another sometimes. Two of my colleagues bore me a grudge for errors in which my pupils surprised them.

It was curious to listen to my colleagues when by chance, during recreation or in the refectory, talk fell on theological subjects. Most of them showed a state of mind and an ignorance worthy of the Middle Ages. One day in 1897, à propos of some magazine article, I expressed my conviction that the creed, so-called, of "the Apostles" was not literally the work of its pretended authors. This assertion seemed to them to be heresy. The professor of the fifth, M. Préaubert, one of the seniors, maintained that, before separating, the twelve composed this summary of belief, and that each one contributed an article. On the other hand, M. Lambert, a licentiate of letters, took the opportunity of this conversation to denounce me to the zealot of Solesmes, Dom Marsille, as one who was on the road to the most fundamental scepticism.

My conversation sometimes alarmed my colleagues. I must confess that, generally, I myself did not realize its trend, being firmly convinced of the divine origin and the fundamental truth of Christianity. Thus one day, à propos of certain Angevin biographies—like those of the Reformers of

the Congregation du Bon Pasteur, of the Venerable Mother Euphrasie Pelletier, and of Paul Seigneret—I burst forth : “If the history of the primitive Church was related according to the proceedings of modern hagiography, then humanity has been sadly deceived.” As I believed the Gospels to have been written by divinely inspired authors, my remark in no way concerned this sacrosanct literature, but merely the lives of the Fathers and Martyrs. Some of my colleagues, however, being less imbued with the theory of inspiration, were scandalized, for they thought of the life of Jesus.

Disturbing and irritating as they were, our conversations were none the less frequent.

No layman could ever imagine how far from being intellectual are the conversations of a score of priests, even professors. Their commonplace character is accounted for, so it seems to me, in this way. Priests who have kept the faith do not generally experience any scientific curiosity, and prefer to talk shop or professional gossip. As for priests who are more or less troubled in their belief, they do not like to discuss dangerous subjects, which might disclose the direction of their thoughts, and expose them to be reported to the bishop as liberals and sceptics.

However aloof and discreet the clergy may be in face of great questions, there is one which has always enjoyed the privilege of untying their tongues—that is, the political question. They are obsessed by the desire to reconquer their ancient power over national life. Is it merely a craving for domination, or are they really convinced that if they wielded the power they might use it to revive faith and reform morals? At any rate, power remains the aim that impassions them. Only they disagree as to the means for attaining it. Should the means be adherence to tradition and to the ancient expedients? Or should new ones be tried?

At the time when I was completing my ecclesiastical studies, Leo XIII was adopting the policy of a rally to the republic. Our bishop, Mgr. Freppel, was strongly opposed to it, and he thundered against its champions, Cardinal Lavigerie and Bishop Isoard. On Mgr. Freppel's death the

government naturally appointed in his place a republican, Mgr. Mathieu. The new prelate craftily tried to keep in favour with the Government without alienating the royalists, who, in his diocese, were the true and faithful supporters of the Church. Mgr. Baron was clearly on the conservative side. Episcopal politics furnished the professors of Mongazon with interminable subjects of conversation. The majority were royalists (some of them even more so than the Comte de Paris), but they met with a few young opponents. Discussion was more lively than profound.¹ The political rally is but an expedient. That which it is most important for a modern man to do, and that which is impossible for the clergy, is to consider everything, not from the point of view of outworn tradition, but from the point of view of science.

¹ It was all the more lively because the professors read *La Libre Parole* and *L'Autorité*, newspapers which were often disrespectful to the Pope and the bishops. On the other hand, the recent bishops of Angers deserved criticism. Abbot Yves of Kersabiec summed up their influence over their clergy in the following manner, no doubt slightly exaggerated: "Mgr. Freppel killed sincerity; Mgr. Mathieu killed respect; Mgr. Baron killed morality."

CHAPTER IX

MY FIRST PUBLISHED WORKS

The Life of Canon Henri Bernier—Article on the Low Seminary—The Life of Dom Couturier—Studies on the Origin of the Angers Church—Conflicts with my Bishop and my Colleagues.

1899–1901

ACCORDING to the practice usual in the Angers diocese, the orientation of my life seemed likely to be the following: After having professed history for ten or, at the most, fifteen years, I should become a parish priest, and should, perhaps, have time to change my parish two or three times before departing to receive my heavenly reward. I was content with this career, and dreamed of no other. The idea that Anjou might cease to be the field of my labour never occurred to me. Consequently, the acquisition of accurate knowledge of the province and the circles in which my whole life would be passed seemed to me by no means an unprofitable occupation.

Shortly before appointing me professor of history M. Ledoyen had taken advantage of my simplicity and had confided to my care the classification and maintenance of the library and archives, which were in utter confusion. I put my heart into the work. I arranged the library in as perfect order as was possible, considering the limitations of space and the slenderness of its resources. The annual sum at my disposition was at first one hundred francs. Sometimes even that was not forthcoming, and if for a few years it was increased to three hundred that amount was never exceeded.

The archives taught me not merely the history of the Low Seminary, but a number of interesting details concerning ecclesiastical personages of whom I had heard very different opinions, and concerning whom I might myself

have something to say. The papers of the second Superior, Canon Henri Bernier, were of particular interest. A strong Gallican, he had fought against victorious ultramontaniam. The struggles that filled his career had been waged in all the dioceses of France—indeed, almost throughout the Roman Church. But where could such controversy be more interesting than in Anjou, since there its protagonists were the restorer of monasticism, Dom Guéranger; the eulogist of the Inquisition, Jules Morel; the great politician, Falloux; the chivalrous Comte de Quatrebarbes; a minister of the Second Republic, Freslon; and a typical administrating bishop, Mgr. Angebault.

With M. Ledoyen's permission, I undertook to devote a little of my leisure to writing the Life of Canon Bernier and a history of the Low Seminary. This undertaking cost me infinite labour, because I had not been taught how to work, and many of the documents had been scattered. I spent two months of the 1898 vacation in putting the last touches to my Life of M. Bernier, and I began to publish it in *La Revue de l'Anjou* in the November of that year. It continued until the end of 1900. It was also in 1900 that I published my article on the Low Seminary in *La Semaine Religieuse* of the diocese.

Though this was the work of a good Angevin, I remained strongly addicted to Benedictinism. Accordingly, I piously collected all possible information about the Father Abbot, Dom Couturier, who had lived long in Anjou. And from this, as time went on, there resulted a little biographical memorial. The Benedictines of Solesmes and of Saint-Maur urged me to publish it, knowing that their intestine quarrels would long hinder them from writing anything about their history, and that this edifying life might help to counterbalance the unfortunate revelations of 1893. I submitted my MS. to Dom Cabrol, who was then Prior of Solesmes; to Dom Guillou, a historian of good repute in the Abbey; to Dom Fromage, the continuator of Dom Guéranger's *Année Liturgique*; to Dom Legeay, a relative of my venerable hero; and to Dom Marsille, who frequently came to Angers,

having been appointed confessor to a community affiliated to the Benedictine order, the Servants of the Poor. Dom Fromage sent the most delicate passages in my MS. to the Mother Abbess, and Dom Legeay submitted the whole of it to Dom Logerot. When the work had been thus revised and amended, I asked the Bishop's permission to have it printed. The Bishop, Mgr. Rumeau, who had been but lately appointed, wished to make sure that the Benedictines would have no objection to the publication. I was able to reassure him. Then he charged one of his vicars-general, M. Grellier, now Bishop of Laval, to examine the MS. My reader found the book full of a diffuse liberalism, and criticized it severely, advising, nevertheless, that it should be printed. The Bishop did not hesitate to grant me the *imprimatur* : he then posed as a liberal ; under the pontificate of Pius X he became intransigent. Out of courtesy towards M. Grellier I slightly modified some expressions, but without making any radical change in the story ; and, as from that time any theologian's approval of a collection of facts seemed to me ridiculous, I contented myself with printing in my book the permission I had received for its publication. It appeared on June 7, 1899.

Most of the monks of Solesmes and Saint-Maur congratulated me immediately. More especially pleased were the Abbots of Marseilles, Ligugé, and the Prior of Saint-Wandrille, who were loyal to the memory of Dom Couturier. Dom Guépin (who had become Abbot of Silos in 1894) advised me to prepare a second edition forthwith, assuring me that the first would soon be exhausted. Acting on his advice, I devoted the following vacation to gathering new documents in the monasteries of the congregation. I stayed at Ligugé from the 22nd to the 25th of July ; at Glanfeuil from the 29th to the 30th ; at Saint-Wandrille from the 13th to the 29th of August ; at Marseilles from the 11th of September till the 1st of October.

I will not describe these monasteries, but I cannot refrain from noting the charm of Saint-Wandrille, a truly poetical scene, with its noble ruins, its ancient park, with smooth

lawns, flowers, ruined balustrades, and wild cypress-trees. One can understand how those who are alarmed or wearied by the world seek retirement in so beautiful a spot and in such sweet solitude.

The abbey at Marseilles, though it was a contrast to Saint-Wandrille, being cramped in a populous and business quarter, had also its wonder ; this was its own Abbot, Dom Jacques-Christophe Gauthey.

Among the orthodox Dom Gauthey represents the most complete and the most attractive holiness that I have ever met, or, as Marcel Hébert said, the most idealistic form of the religious sentiment. I have already paid him homage in my *Notes sur les Profés de Solesmes*, but here I can give more details concerning him.

He loved Solesmes : he believed in the mystical and doctrinal mission of Solesmes ; he realized the ideal of Solesmes as much as any monk of the congregation. He was a saint, and at the same time an artist. "How good God must be, my Father," said a woman to him one day ; "how good God must be, since you are so good !" What charming simplicity ! Nothing in him of that false humility from which the best religious are rarely exempt. A soul for ever singing ! A new Francis of Assisi, he constantly praised God in all his creatures.

He accepted the strange occurrences in the monastery of St. Cecilia as purely supernatural ; and, as around him at Marseilles, either in convents or in the houses of fashionable women, he met with analogous phenomena, his life for twenty years was a mystical dream of a most pronounced character. Towards the end of the reign of the Abbot Dom Couturier suspicion of the real state of affairs began to disturb him. The Benedictine nuns had undertaken to establish a foundation at Marseilles, and, in accordance with the theories of the Mother Abbess, they wished to have Benedictine monks near them. Consequently, they resolved to remove the abbey to the suburbs, near to the superb estate where they were about to establish themselves. Dom Gauthey, despite his mysticism, understood that such a proximity would outrage Marseilles

opinion : he refused to countenance such a plan. The nuns then began to organize little cabals against him, which tended to render his rule over his abbey impossible and to bring about his resignation. When, in 1893, on the deposition of Dom Delatte, he was nominated Temporary Abbot of Solesmes (as being the oldest abbot of the congregation, and as not having been concerned with the charges brought against the Abbot and Abbess) the Benedictine nuns, as far as their very delicate situation permitted them, lost no opportunity of tormenting him with pin-pricks. Dom Gauthey forgave everything, but he was obliged to reconsider his mystical illusions. His dream was over, and when I saw him in 1899 it had not recommenced.

Dom Gauthey made a friend of me at once, because I had spoken well of Dom Couturier, for whom he had a great affection ; and he talked to me at length of what interested him most in the world—of cases he had observed of ecstasy, visions, voices, revelations, stigmata, and exorcism. He did not tell me that he himself had sometimes been taken for a thaumaturge, but I knew it and understood why.

These conversations gave me an impression, by no means orthodox, that these phenomena extended far beyond the framework of theology ; they revealed to me the importance of psychical studies for those who would understand not merely Christian mysticism, but the most general and the most fundamental religious phenomena.

I was at Marseilles when Leo XIII's encyclical to the French clergy appeared. It was read in the refectory, according to monastic custom. The Pope solemnly disavowed the new philosophical apologetics, modern exegesis, and certain social tendencies. A number of liberal aspirations which I had fondly cherished for at least seven years¹ were formally disapproved of. Like those believers who are determined not to be disillusioned, I thought not that my hopes were lost, but merely that their realization was postponed—sadly postponed.

¹ See *ante*, chap. vii, p. 82. I have analysed this encyclical in my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, chap. iii.

My impressions resembled those of the Catholics who had been called "liberal," notably Père Gratry and Père Hyacinthe Loyson,¹ on the publication of the *Syllabus* in 1864.

When I returned to Angers from Marseilles, my publisher told me that my *Dom Couturier* was not selling, and that certain monks were far from recommending it. They had perceived that my little book would henceforth prevent their writing the history of the congregation in the way they wished to. Moreover, by depicting the patriarchal and simple rule of Dom Couturier, I had shown up the rule of his successor, who was growing more autocratic and luxurious.² Finally, a few monks whose theology was more moderate than that of their colleagues regretted my having represented Dom Couturier's dogmatism in all its crudity. Dom Cabrol wrote to me: "Your portrait is true to life; too true in a sense. Dom Couturier, whom I venerate more than any one, for he was a real saint, was prejudiced against all criticism, prejudiced against all German scholarship, the upholder of certain historical theses which are indefensible to-day."³ A monk of Ligugé, Dom Besse, after having told me that my book had been read aloud in the monastery, and that it had "been listened to with pleasure," added: "You know how difficult it is for an author to sustain the test of being read in the refectory. Your two chapters on the Monastic Ideal and the Superior General aroused certain objections. Their fault is excessive sincerity. Certain details might have been passed over in silence; they were useless. They might be said to be in bad taste. On some minds they may produce a painful impression."⁴ The

¹ See *Le Père Hyacinthe dans l'Eglise Romaine*, chap. v.

² In his book *l'Oblat* (Paris, 1903), pp. 4 and 399, J. K. Huysmans described the state of Solesmes at that time. I have cited these passages in my *Grande Mystique*, p. 309.

³ Letter of Nov. 3, 1899.

⁴ Letter of Nov. 28, 1899. Dom Besse made a similar observation in reviewing my book. "The author," he wrote, "knew and loved the Father Abbot. . . . Perfect sincerity runs through the whole work; he puts his own ideas and sentiments on one side in order to allow the Father Abbot to act, speak, and think as he was; some will reproach him with having gone too far in this direction." *Bulletin de Saint Martin et de Saint Benoît*, monthly magazine published by the R. R. Benedictine Fathers, Jan., 1900, pp. 104-5. Dom Besse, who had "rallied" under Leo XIII, appeared as an ardent monarchical propagandist under Pius X.

publication of *Dom Couturier* showed me the obstacles that *esprit de corps* may raise in the way of truth. Another experience was soon to prove that certain pages of ancient history are as delicate to write as modern and contemporary history.

I had taken it into my head to write a history of the diocese of Angers. In 1898 I was studying its early years—that is to say, the Gallo-Roman period. When my pages on this period were written I resolved to submit them to the judgment of competent people. It seemed to me that the best way to do this would be to join the Academy of the place frequented by the scholars and archæologists of the department, the Angers National Society of Agriculture, Science, and Arts. I should make my work known at its meetings and profit from the observations made. I became a candidate, and was unanimously elected on June 12, 1899. Certain circumstances enhanced the honour of my admission. Two natives of Anjou applied at the same time as I did. One, my colleague in the Low Seminary, the Abbé Lamprière, was not elected; the other, a layman, a gentleman who had probably always been received everywhere with wide open doors, M. Gilles Depperière, President of the Angers Society of the Friends of Art, passed with only the necessary number of votes. This result so disconcerted the officers of the Committee that they made a rule that in the future a candidate should be admitted or refused without mention of the number of votes he had obtained.

The society had then about eighty members; but at the meetings there were seldom more than twenty, and generally the same. The most assiduous were two archæologists, MM. Gustave d'Espinay and de Farcy; the Abbés Alexis Crosnier, Felix Hy, Charles Marchand, professors at the Catholic faculties; the Abbés Charles Urseau and François Uzureau, especially interested in the history of the province; M. Eusèbe Pavie, an honest citizen who fancied himself a writer. The meetings of these wits were pretty dull, as may be gathered from the picture drawn of them by the most distinguished among the members, M. René Bazin,

in his book, *En Province*, in the chapter entitled "A Learned Society."¹

Before communicating to the Society my work on the origin of the church at Angers, I deemed it well, by way of introduction, to submit a few passages on the date of the foundation of bishoprics in France. I began to make this communication at the December meeting in 1899. The President of the Society, Senator Guillaume Bodinier, was not there. A meeting of the Senate, transformed into a High Court of Justice, detained him in Paris. The officers present were the Abbé Hy, who presided; Dr. Paul Maisonneuve, secretary; and the treasurer, M. Dauge.² Attracted by the question of ecclesiastical history which figured on the agenda, the bishop honoured the Society by his presence. He became agitated when he heard me putting on one side venerable traditions, such as "the mission to Provence."

After I had finished, Monseigneur spoke; and, as "guardian of the doctrines of the Church"—those were his words—he disapproved of my work.³

At the January meeting I continued my reading, and I gave a résumé of the discussions on the subject between 1848 and 1859.⁴ This brought me to relate the controversy on the Origin of the Church at Angers, and thrust me into the heart of my subject, which was entirely descriptive.

The main interest of a study on the origin of the bishopric of Angers is concentrated on two points:—

1. This bishopric certainly does not go back to the first century, as Airet maintained, nor to the second, as Dom Chamard contends. It dates from the fourth.

2. No one can prove the existence of one of its so-called

¹ The author has discreetly transferred the scene from Anjou to Brittany, a province no less conservative than Anjou.

² Doctor of medicine and science, professor at the Catholic college of science, and author of numerous popular scientific works.

³ The minutes of the meeting presented an emasculated account of the proceedings. Cf. *Mémoires de la Société Nationale d'Agriculture, Sciences et Arts d'Angers*, 1899, p. 592. The gist of my lecture that evening may be found on pp. 5-14 of the pamphlet, *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité des Eglises de France au XIXième Siècle*, 1st ed.; pp. 1-12 2nd ed. The third edition contains numerous additions.

⁴ Pp. 14-47 of the first edition of the pamphlet referred to.

early bishops, Saint René, who, according to legend, was restored to life in childhood, even after he had been dead seven years.

I should have wished to give a lecture on the history of the Gallo-Roman bishops of the city at the February meeting, but I perceived that it would not be understood, and that my proceedings would appear disconcerting and whimsical. I had hoped that my hearers would take my word that the question of René had been closed since the eighteenth century, and this with the sanction of the Bollandists, whose authority they revered; that at the beginning of the nineteenth century two provincial scholars, Jean François Bodin and Victor Godard Faultrier, had cut this legend out of local history without giving occasion for any protest; that the archivist of the department, Celestin Port, and Mgr. Louis Duchesne had taken up the same attitude. I now saw that the anti-critical reaction had done its work in the little Angers academy as elsewhere, and that I should be involved in a discussion on the historicity of St. René and on the life of Bishop Maurille, on which it depends. I read this essay on February 12. It seemed conclusive. On April 19 I was able to read my first chapter on the bishops, on May 14 that on discipline.

On the agenda for that day there figured also a lecture on "The Life of Saint Maurille, according to Grandet." It was a refutation of my book in disguise. I was more surprised than any one. The author of the monograph, one of my good friends at the seminary, evidently anxious to curry favour with the bishop, had asked me for my manuscript in order to revise his thesis at leisure. I had lent it to him. He had given it back after having made use of it, and without telling me of his design. It is, of course, natural to criticize a friend's lucubrations; but to borrow his own weapons in order to attack him is a course which would never have occurred to me. I had still much to learn about the manners of our scientific society.

The editorial committee of the society agreed to publish my work as well as that which aimed at refuting the greater part of it. I gave my manuscript to the general secretary,

M. Maisonneuve. I did not ask for the publication of my first dissertation. As it alluded to certain personalities, I, as the result of my own judgment, decided it would be imprudent not to try and have it included in the proceedings of a very pacific society, which was anxious not to quarrel with any one.¹

At this juncture a call was paid on the bishop. "My lord," solemnly began his visitor, "it is not Canon Portais² who comes to see you; it is the Procurator of the *Officialité*."³ And he lodged a formal complaint against my opinions. Because I did not believe the legend of St. René, secondary patron of the diocese, he pronounced me a heretic. The episcopal council met twice to deliberate on my case.

On June 16 (1900) a letter from one of the bishop's secretaries summoned me to appear in the monastery of Les Plaines after lunch on the following day.

I found the prelate leaving the dining room with the Vicar-General Baudriller, M. Lambeat, formerly professor to the second-year students at Mongazon and chaplain of the community, and a third priest whom I did not know. His Grace came straight to me, and we were together, walking in the garden, for exactly forty minutes.

The bishop enlarged on the following points: The procurator, by virtue of his office, had denounced my essay on St. René; it had occasioned scandal, especially among ecclesiastics; the episcopal council had deliberated upon it; they reproached me with being of a paradoxical cast of mind, with dangerous tendencies; worse still, with a positive offence—that of having published a list of the bishops of Angers, from which the name of St. René was omitted. Now, ecclesiastics are forbidden to write anything without submitting it in all humility to the bishop.

¹ I published this essay in *La Province du Maine* (Jan. to June, 1900), and as a separate work (Laval, A. Goupil, in 8°, 86 pp.) with the title, *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité des Eglises de France au XIXième Siècle*. It ran to two further editions.

² Charles Louis Portais, who died on Nov. 21, 1903. He did not like me because I appreciated his Life of the Venerable Mother Pelletier at its true value.

³ An ecclesiastical Council established by the concordat of 1801. Tran.

I replied that I had not published such a list. Possibly my censors did me the honour to confuse me with the Abbé Duchesne, who, in his latest volume,¹ had, in fact, given a list of our bishops, from which he had deleted the name of St. René and even that of St. Eutropius, without giving his reasons—believing, doubtless, that criticism had already done its work sufficiently.

“M. Duchesne published the list?,” Monseigneur cried. “Ah, well! I shall write to him. I shall ask him for his reasons, and, if they are not conclusive, I shall have our traditions well defended. St. Eutropius was a bishop of Saintes, was he not?”

“My lord, he is said to have been bishop of Angers; his name occurs in the ninth century, in the famous legend of St. Maur.”

His Grace, not having prepared any conversation on this subject, broke off and returned to the Abbé Duchesne. He confessed to having a certain esteem and admiration for him; but, he added, “he is too much given to compromise.”

“Are you in communication with him?”

“No, my lord; I have not that honour.”

Thereupon the bishop treated me to all the commonplaces admitted by the clergy on these questions: the authority of legends in the breviary (*lex orandi, lex credendi*); the extreme care taken at Rome to consider all the most trifling details in the services of the various dioceses (the bishop knew this by experience, having himself submitted a service of *Notre Dame de Bonne-Encontre*); the importance of not disturbing the faith of priests and their flocks, who might be inclined to generalize from my conclusions; the crime of furnishing with arguments those who do not wish to believe, and who reject a religion which mortifies the senses; the illusions of authors concerning their own works; the presumption of youth; the soundness of the argument for accepting authority in matters of diocesan origins, as well as in those great questions of transubstantiation and auricular confession; the danger and the arbitrariness of criticism.

¹ *Les Fastes Episcopaux*, vol. ii.

"If you do not admit the resurrection of St. René, you cannot believe in that of the young man of Sarepta nor of Lazarus." "If you do not admit tradition in the matter of St. René, why should you admit it in the matter of auricular confession?"

Then the bishop spoke of the weakness of the negative argument; and, in order finally to convince me of his competence as a historian, he told me that he had written an essay on St. Phœbadius of Agen, who may be found described as Fœgadius and Filadius, but such variations do not prove his life to be fabulous nor that three persons are to be distinguished in him. I assured Monseigneur that I held exactly the same views on the subject of the second bishop of Angers, likewise called Epodemius, Apotemius, and Apodemius.

The bishop next asked me to give him a summary of my essay on St. René. This I did as well as I could. His Grace began again to speak of his rôle as "guardian of the faith" and "guardian of peace." "The question you raise," he said, "will not be fought out. There will be no controversy, because I am determined there shall be none, because I will not have the faith of my priests incriminated, because I will not have a scandal, for which I might be held responsible. After all, your case is not so bad as I thought. You admit that a holy body, said to be St. René's, was venerated at Angers in the tenth century, at the same time as that of St. Maurille. This body is a reality, and it is honoured by a religious service. That saves you. Otherwise I do not see how you could have preserved the belief you owe to the liturgy and the authority of the Church; nor how, with such ideas, you could still say mass on the day of St. René. But you are addicted to paradoxes. I am told that you work hard, and that you rise at four o'clock; but you produce little, and this little is bad. I have read your article on the Low Seminary. Several things in it displeased me. Consequently, I have forbidden Canon Grimault (editor of *La Semaine Religieuse*) to publish any article by you without having first submitted the whole of it to the episcopate.

I shall either look into it myself, or, if I am absent, M. Grellier ; in his absence, M. Baudriller ; in his, M. Thibault ; in his, M. Jamin."

I replied that such measures seemed to me natural. I myself had hitherto submitted all my articles to the Superior of Mongazon, and I had asked M. Grimault to cut out anything he disapproved of. The bishop replied that henceforth he would see the proofs of all my articles for *La Semaine Religieuse*, and that, as for those intended for *La Revue de l'Anjou*, the manuscript must be submitted to the episcopate before it was sent to the printer. He asked me to give him a copy of my essay on the legend of St. René. And thus the conversation ended.

A few days later I went to the secretary of the society and asked for my manuscript in order to make a copy. M. Maisonneuve confided to me that the bishop had been to see him, accompanied by Canon Thibault, that the conversation had lasted an hour, and that his Grace was opposed to the publication, not merely of my essay on St. René, but also of a single line of my essay on "The Origins of the Church at Angers."

At the same time I learned that the Benedictines of Solesmes were extremely dissatisfied with the turn taken by the Life of Canon Bernier in the *Revue d'Anjou*, and by the story of the history of the controversy on apostolic succession in the churches of France in *La Province du Maine*. These two articles showed up the part played by their predecessors too plainly. As for the Abbot of St. Maur, he declared that he considered himself insulted in that I had denied the story of the foundation of his monastery and cast doubt on the mission of St. Benedict's disciple. Thus my earliest work showed me that, if it is difficult to know the truth, it is even more difficult to tell it.

Meanwhile my father and mother, whose health was breaking, had in July, 1899, given up their little shop, and, deciding to be content with a meagre income of fifteen hundred francs, had retired to a few kilometres from Angers. As for my young brother, he had gone to learn commerce in

a Parisian shop. After a while my parents began to think they would be more useful near him than in the idleness of complete retirement. In Paris my brother might come to live with them, and they would lavish upon him their care and their counsels. It was not without apprehension that I saw them leave the pleasant Loire valley, their quiet little house, their garden full of flowers and verdure, with its trellises and pear-trees rich with hope, to live on a third floor in Paris. But they set forth with confidence, glad to be going to their Benjamin. They established themselves in the capital in August, 1900.

I spent my holidays with them, dividing my leisure between the Bibliothèque Nationale and the International Exhibition. At the Library I completed my studies on the church of Angers. The Exhibition, which demonstrated the progress of all nations, showed me that Christianity plays no great part among them. Sometimes I contemplated these marvels in the company of Dom Guépin. When we entered the Japanese hall, he, like me, was dazzled, and, leaning towards me, he said : "*Finis Christianitatis.*"

After the long vacation I took my manuscript to M. Maisonneuve. It seemed to embarrass him, and, after some hesitation, he asked me whether I had obtained the episcopal *imprimatur*. I told him that I did not need it, as I had avoided any doctrinal question. I added that I was not one of those who involve ecclesiastical authorities in questions of scholarship, and that any intervention such as he suggested would be absolutely contrary to the spirit and to the statutes of the society. Nevertheless, I declared that I was ready to withdraw my manuscript if its publication would be likely to disturb the traditional peace of our company.

I had, unfortunately, been in too great a hurry to go to M. Maisonneuve. I ought first to have sounded my colleagues' opinion concerning me. Certain hard words spoken by ecclesiastics had made me an object of suspicion. I had been represented as remaining, out of vile motives, in a Church whose dogmas I had ceased to believe in. Insignificant as was the place I occupied in the Church, means

were taken to show me that I had no right to it. During the holidays, priests had taken pains to warn my pupils, even the youngest, against my teaching. Certain amusing incidents in my professorial life resulted therefrom.

Was it a question of the baptism of Clovis, then some mischievous boy would attribute it to St. René; another would ask me to read his life; a third would write at the beginning and end of his exercises the pious invocation: "St. René, pray for us." The poor children were delighted thus to have humiliated one who was their master and a heretic.

These circumstances brought me to humble myself so far as to ask for my essay to be printed, in order to prove that I had written nothing new or rash.¹

In the beginning of November, the president of the Society, accompanied by M. Maisonneuve, called on the bishop to ask him, according to some, whether they should accept my monograph; according to others, to entreat him to suppress it with all the power of his authority. Questioned as to what he thought of my essay, his Grace declared that he knew nothing about it. "It was sent to you, my lord," said M. Maisonneuve; and, as his Grace denied it, M. Maisonneuve gave him my own manuscript. Later, M. Maisonneuve discovered that, as I had told him many times, the copy had been given to the bishop, but unofficially, and reserving to the society its full rights to discuss and criticize it. Astonished at not hearing from M. Maisonneuve, I asked him by letter, on November 15, to inform me as to what had been decided about the publication of my essay. The reply was an invitation to call on him. I went. He told me that the bishop would suppress any magazine, book, or newspaper which published my essay as a whole or in parts. "As for the manuscript," he added, "I have given it to his Grace."

I possessed no other copy. If my manuscript was of no great value in itself, at least it enabled me to prove that my

¹ Letter to M. Maisonneuve, October 30, 1900. This letter and those of November 28 and December 20, to which I refer later, appear in their entirety in *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque*.

opinions were not without foundation. Several people, whose esteem meant much to me, interested by the fuss being made about this work, asked me to let them see it. My inability to satisfy them put me in a false position, which might justify all sorts of wrong interpretations. I demanded my monograph from M. Maisonneuve. He at once, with perfect goodwill, did his best to procure it for me, but in vain.

I then determined to resign from this singular learned society. I had entered it trusting in its statutes which guaranteed its liberty, and that liberty had been violated by the president and the secretary, who had arranged my affair with the bishop, as bishop, and without informing the members. The questions discussed in my essay on the Gallo-Roman period of the church of Angers were less serious than those I should have to deal with in the Merovingian and Carolingian periods. What difficulties would confront me then ! It was better to resign at once.

On December 16 I sent in my resignation to the president, asking him to be so kind as to have my manuscript restored to me as soon as possible. The president saw the bishop the next day. As three days afterwards I was still without my manuscript, I told M. Maisonneuve that I should resort to every legal expedient in order to obtain its restitution. M. Maisonneuve brought it back to me the next day.

During all these discussions one point had especially intrigued me. Why did so many persons who were totally indifferent to history make such a fuss about my poor essay ? Why did such and such a priest, entirely innocent of any erudition, even religious, appear more especially my adversary ? In the end I discovered that certain of my opponents were not disinterested. Upon the unstable foundation of such legends as that of St. René they had built up charitable societies which increased their income ; and these they were defending against untimely criticism. The patronage of St. René had been associated with a foundation on behalf of children living and dying without baptism. I was completely ignorant of this when I wrote my essay. But those who exploited it could not afford to be ignorant of me.

The priest lives on the altar and on such annexes as charities under the patronage of St. René and the boxes of St. Expédit.¹ On one of these annexes I had unconsciously laid a disturbing hand. That was unpardonable.

My faith in the altar blinded me. My study of the origins of churches in France had nevertheless taught me that money had been at the bottom of numerous legends and devout actions. I ought to have known that my brethren did not differ from the clergy of earlier days.

In these memoirs and in my other books I have refrained from telling curious and piquant anecdotes about money and other subjects. I have confined myself to generalities, and I intend to do so. Why should I dishonour priests who have enjoyed a by no means bad reputation? And even suppose I were not to mention the heroes of such stories by name, why should I contribute to a literature of comic and irreverent tales which in every language is quite voluminous enough? Many priests who have turned out badly were not wicked people; they had probably entered the priesthood with pure motives. "Just consider," said Jules Lemaître, "that unless he be guilty of a sacrilegious lie, which is seldom the case, every priest, whatever may have been his weaknesses afterwards, on the day that he prostrated himself at the feet of the bishop who ordained him, performed the most complete act of self-sacrifice that it is possible to imagine, that in that hour he rose to the highest degree of moral dignity, and that he was indeed a hero, were it only for one moment."² A priest's theological

¹ The priest of Angers Cathedral had in his church a St. Expédit box which brought him in that very year (1900) four thousand francs. The worship of St. Expédit is founded on a play of words. What was called "business catholicism" was then being intensely cultivated in the diocese of Angers, as in many others. Priests extracted money from the devout, nominally for all sorts of local good works, and they prevented money from leaving the diocese. In the diocesan *Semaine Religieuse* (July 1, 1900) is a delicate plea for this system. Those who dedicate themselves to the worship of the Sacred Heart have their Montmartre at the Madeleine. Those who consecrate their fortune to the glorification of Mary have twenty sanctuaries to adorn in Anjou before thinking of embellishing that of Lourdes. Those, finally, who take pity on souls in Purgatory have a fine brotherhood, and also, alas! a sanctuary to be restored at Angers itself. Indeed, is it not to be wished that in this last good work, as in the others, the money of Anjou should not be scattered abroad?

² *Les Contemporains*, 2nd series, article on Ferdinand Fabre.

illusions are dispelled by experience and study. Experience teaches him that society, as at present constituted, esteems nothing but wealth. Accordingly, he does not want to remain poor. He becomes a charlatan in holy things, as, had he continued in the world, he might have become a charlatan in finance, medicine, or politics.

If I have found it necessary to refer discreetly to scandals¹ which constitute a part of the experience I acquired during nine years in the diocesan priesthood, it is none the less important to insist that these things made no profound impression on me. The faith of young, uneducated priests is frequently undermined by the incredulosity or the imperfections they observe in their elders. My faith was too intellectual and too literary to be assailed by such things. It could be destroyed only by the fallacious distinctions and the sentimental subtleties of apologetics and by the concentration of my mind on the titles on which the Church founds its pretensions.

¹ Concerning ecclesiastical celibacy I will say only a few words, because I have dealt with it at length in my book, *Autour d'un Prêtre Marié*. It is a fine ideal, just as Christian marriage is a fine ideal. Practice has made of it at certain times and in certain places a mere convention, or even a kind of imposture. None the less, the Church preaches two fine ideals.

CHAPTER X

MY FIRST INVENTORY

An Evolutionary Theology—Sincerity among Priests—Complaints against my Teaching—I Retire—The Clergy of Anjou.

1901

I HAD written very innocently in my monograph on the controversy concerning Apostolical Succession :—

A priest is wrong when he defends as pious and authentic childish and fabricated legends, in the face of professional medievalists and historians, who discern enormous mistakes of criticism and lamentable confusion in a sphere with which they are well acquainted. Thus laymen cannot help fearing lest such intrepid apologists might be even more fatally misleading concerning the Bible and the sacraments, on which they themselves, as they possess no special knowledge, are incapable of forming an opinion.

In the numerous discussions I had to submit to concerning the legend of St. René, highly authorized persons did not hesitate to put to me questions of this kind, questions which my bishop had already put¹: "If you do not admit his resurrection, then neither can you believe in the resurrection of the young man of Sarepta, nor in that of Lazarus." "If you do not admit that we are right in the matter of St. René, how can you admit that we are right in the matter of auricular confession?"

This type of reasoning was not altogether new to me; I had already come across it in the writings of the author of the legend of St. René, the deacon Archanald. In order to reduce those who did not believe his words to silence, he addressed them thus :—

If we believe that at the command of a man of faith the sun, moon,

¹ See *ante*, chap. ix, p. 116.

and stars remained still for the space of one day ; that at a blow from Moses' rod the Red Sea was divided, and that from the hard rock of Horeb water gushed forth ; that, in violation of all laws of nature, the ass, in terror, spoke sensible words ; that, in answer to Elijah's prayer, the heavens were closed and that it did not rain for three years and a-half, and that again, in answer to his prayer, the heavens were opened : if we believe all these prodigies, and also, what is even more marvellous, that for the redemption of mankind, by a wonderful and inexpressible operation of the Holy Spirit, the Word of the Father was born of a virgin, very God in very man ; that he has himself by the mystery of the cross destroyed the empire of death, that through him the Father will in the twinkling of an eye restore the bodies reduced to dust of all men who have died since the beginning of the world to raise them to glory or to thrust them down into eternal torment ; we may well believe that through the Blessed Maurille, glorious bishop, he restored a child to life seven years after his death. The blessed Pope Gregory hath said : "*Fides non habet meritum, cui humana ratio præbet experimentum.*" Wherefore he who doth not firmly believe this miracle, which God hath deigned to work in his saints and through his saints, will no more believe many others, those of which we have just spoken and those which God will vouchsafe to work.

This Archanald reasoned cleverly, and, when reasoning like Archanald, my bishop and my other critics carried on the tradition—the ecclesiastical tradition of Anjou. This I saw, but something more serious that I did not as yet suspect is that they were in the pure Christian tradition. What could I reply to them ; I who admitted all the miracles in the Bible, those of the Old as well as of the New Testament ; I who, having hardly done anything but venerate the Holy Scriptures without having thoroughly studied them, was far from thinking that the majority of the fundamental books of Christianity are as much forgeries as was that of Archanald, and that, in one sense, Christianity may be considered the greatest fabrication humanity has known ?

I then believed that to compare René's resurrection seven years after his death with that of the young man of Sarepta or with that of Lazarus was extremely misleading. Desirous to correct this, I renounced my study of the church in Anjou, and henceforth devoted my leisure to the study of the Bible and to the history of dogma.

As for the Bible, I had been given as the only orthodox

text-book that of Fulcran Vigouroux in its earliest editions. No one who knows this book and the matter in question will be surprised that thirteen years of study and reflection had led me to think differently. Nevertheless, I still believed that Catholic apologetics continued to hold an honourable position. What was my surprise, therefore, when I came to take stock, to find on every hand withdrawals and capitulations! Even on points which were not yielded the only defence set up was borrowed from Protestants. The Protestant Deluc provided the way of escape from the seven days of creation, and the pastor Pozzi expounded it better than Fulcran Vigouroux. The Protestant Cuvier is the patriarch of theories of a more or less partial flood. The Protestant Quatrefages is the great anti-evolution authority. The pastor Edmond de Pressensé is the cleverest refuter of Renan's *Life of Jesus*.¹

The totalling up of the results of this controversy on matters of dogma shocked the prejudices which my education had inculcated upon me. In my opinion, there can hardly be anything in the world more sad than the moment when a priest perceives his dogmatic theories to be brutally refuted by a few clearly established facts. He has lived in the most perfect certitude, and then he discovers that there are valid objections to several points. He has believed that the body of clergy to which he esteemed it an honour to belong was the guardian of civilization, the depository of all knowledge; and he finds that for centuries the clergy have, on the whole, been behaving mainly as a caste anxious to maintain against every one and everything antiquated ideas, privileges, and revenues. It is impossible to imagine anything more poignant and more humiliating.

In face of even such a discovery my faith stood firm. By dint of constant readjustments I had transposed it. After having naïvely believed that my religion, by virtue of what the theologians termed its "immutability," resided as a whole in the revelation vouchsafed to Adam and completed by Jesus

¹ In my *Question Biblique au xix^{me} Siècle* I have made myself clear on these various points.

Christ, I had come to be possessed by the idea of its development, its evolution, in a manner analogous, to use classic examples, to the development of man, who remains the same individual as when a child, to the growth of the oak proceeding from the acorn, to the transformation of the graceful butterfly coming from an ugly caterpillar and passing through the dull chrysalis stage.

At that time I believed myself compelled to admit, rightly or wrongly, an evolution taking place under the influence of human conditions and of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and so complete as to imply a veritable transformation of dogmas, ethics, and ritual. These modifications I seemed to see taking place before our very eyes.¹

The evolution theory appeared to me the only way of scientifically establishing the continuity of religion and the sequence of facts. That Catholics might subscribe to such a theory, the little Mongazon professor of history thought he could reasonably admit. I had been observant enough to discover similar convictions around me, notably among the Benedictines of Solesmes. These apologetics were also those of my beloved *Revue d'Histoire et de Littérature Religieuses*.² Why should I have suspected its orthodoxy? It was in great favour at Solesmes. I had all the less reason to fear a loss of faith, seeing that I had never felt any doubt with regard to the fundamental Catholic mysteries—the incarnation, transubstantiation; nor with regard to matters which I regarded as firmly established facts—the institution of the Church and

¹ As proof of this I cited the following passage from a pastoral letter by my bishop: "The successor of Peter exercises his primacy in the sphere of sacraments by reason of the same titles and to the same extent as in the sphere of doctrine. He has received from Jesus Christ the investiture as Pastor of Pastors; he *possesses the plenitude of priesthood*, he is the Sovereign-Priest. His ministry is so indispensable that without him there would be neither episcopate nor priesthood, nor power to ordain nor power to adjudicate. At the same time this power as Pontiff is so universal that it embraces the future as well as the present life. The Church of this world exists only through him. Suppress the Pope and you destroy the unity of the Church of which he is the centre, the holiness of the Church of which he is the source, the catholicity of the Church of which he is the source, the apostolic succession of the Church of which he is the link" (*Pastoral Letter from My Lord Bishop of Angers to the Clergy and the Faithful of his Diocese*, dated June 30, 1900; paragraph iii).

² See above, chapter viii, p. 98.

the papacy by Jesus Christ. I could conceive of no explanation of the world and the meaning of life other than that offered by Christianity. Objections to it had made no impression on my mind, because the authority of the Gospels seemed to prove the divinity of Jesus Christ beyond all refutation. I had, indeed, read no rationalist works. As formerly, but naturally much more than formerly, I had difficulties, but no doubts, and with Newman I could say: "A thousand difficulties do not make one doubt."

If in all sincerity I could still believe myself a Catholic, there were nevertheless a number of points on which I found myself in disagreement with the official view, as, for example, the actual institution of auricular confession by Jesus Christ and the historic value of numerous stories in the Old Testament. This disagreement embarrassed me greatly. It seemed to me immoral to teach that which I no longer believed, to represent faith in God and the love of virtue as on a line with Biblical legends. There were questions on which it was impossible for me to express myself without bringing down emphatic protests on my own head, and even on that of my Superior.

On the other hand, if I still held the essentials of Catholic dogma, the opposition offered to my essay on the legend of St. René, and even to my thesis on apostolic succession, was slowly influencing my mind. My studies of apostolic legends and of the lives of martyrs had shown me that they are for the most part forgeries knowingly and impudently perpetrated by ecclesiastical personages. Finding the legend of St. René originating in a literary forgery, I began to collect forgeries by ecclesiastics, false miracles, false prophecies, pious frauds, devout impostures. I rapidly reaped an abundant harvest of all these things. The hostility I discovered in the Church, from the seventeenth century onward, to scholars determined to tell the truth did not tend to reassure me as to the system in general. Finally, while I was pondering on religious frauds, I heard people discussing patriotic frauds (à propos of the Alfred Dreyfus lawsuit) with lamentable toleration or even complacency.

The Church of my day appeared to me as a caste indifferent

to truth and justice, putting its whole confidence in an alliance with the old political parties, although a number of their representatives (even in Anjou) cared little for its teaching. History showed me that the Church of the past differed little from the Church of the present day.

Other observations made me think furiously. I used to say mass in two communities of women. They were certainly zealous. I discovered among them attempts at auto- and hetero-suggestion, cabals, and intrigues which tallied with my experiences at Solesmes. Conversations with distinguished priests widened my horizon. Those that most impressed me—slightly previous to this period, it is true—were with a Jesuit archæologist, Father Camille de la Croix. I saw him several times at the Abbey of Saint-Maur, where he was carrying out excavations. He spent his days in his diggings, wearing a big blouse and monumental boots, his beard unkempt, and from head to foot as dirty as a Russian peasant. His talk was that of a fanatic, possessed by a mad hatred of Leo XIII, of those who had rallied to the Republic, of critical historians, and of all who did not lavish unstinted praise on his archæological theories. When he had drunk a little more than he ought, which occasionally happened, he burst forth into extravagant and terrible stories, which disclosed the gulfs of oppression and delation that existed among the Jesuits, and which revealed an agony of doubt in his own soul—though he might have been thought rooted and grounded in Catholic belief. One day,¹ for example, he uttered the words which I have reported in my *Crise du Clergé*: “We ought never to learn the exact sciences. They discipline the intellect. One comes to wish to explain everything. One sees gradually that what is served up to us is imagination, and does not respond to reality. Later these observations shake the very foundations of belief.” The erudite archæologist concluded: “I should have been happier had I never studied archæology.”

My interlocutors were always embarrassed when during

¹ June 20, 1898.

our discussions I did not hesitate to face the crucial question—the right and the duty of seeking and announcing the truth. Naturally, they never failed to resort to the axiom: “There are truths which it is advisable not to enunciate.” How often they replied: “To admit this or that would be to confess that the Church is mistaken. If you touch one thing, then everything totters, everything crumbles.” Others approached the question from a different angle. One of my colleagues said to me: “Religion is necessary for the people.” Another maintained the opinion of the knight in *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*: “Superstition is the advanced outwork of religion and must not be destroyed; for it is not advisable that without let or hindrance the ramparts should be approached, their height measured, and scaling ladders put up.” One day M. Letourneau replied to me: “With your turn of mind, where will you stop? At Luther, at Calvin, or at Voltaire?”

Possibly these remarks may give a poor opinion of priestly sincerity. Although in my book, *La Crise du Clergé*, I have examined the subject at length, I think I ought to observe here that the question is more complex than many believe; it is but a part of the great question of the sincerity of mankind in general. The sincerity of priests may well be compared with the sincerity of philosophers. One of these, Ossip-Lourié, wrote:—

The philosopher does not scatter his ideas about haphazard. Some he actually communicates, others he allows to be discerned; but others, again, he keeps to himself, permitting neither his written nor his spoken words to convey the slightest indication of them. They have moved his mind too deeply, tormented his dreams, his wakeful hours, his belief or his scepticism; they have exalted his meditations too fruitlessly for him to bring himself to introduce into other minds all the tumult, all the hopes, and all the disappointments that have devoured his own. And how intensely do we suffer for all this that we keep to ourselves! We ourselves dare not reply to all the questions that torment us.¹

¹ *Croyance Religieuse et Croyance Intellectuelle*, p. 173. This passage by Ossip-Lourié may be compared with the Savoy vicar's terrible tirade: “Where is the philosopher who for the sake of his own glory would not willingly deceive the whole human race?”, etc. M. Jean Pommier, Renan's most recent

Possessing keener insight than Ossip-Lourié, Pascal went to the root of the matter :—

Man is nought but disguise, falsehood, and hypocrisy, both towards himself and towards others. He will not have the truth told to him ; he avoids telling it to others ; and all these dispositions, so remote from justice and reason, have their natural root in his heart.

Will the human heart ever rid itself of this "natural root," or must one believe, with M. Paulhan, that "hypocrisy and lying are absolutely necessary to all human society"?¹

However that may be, for having always sought truth and told the little I have been able to discover, I have passed for a fool and an *enfant terrible*.² My opponents were right. My excuse (if it can be called one) lay in my love of truth and in my belief that their fears were unfounded. But I was wrong. In my childishness I imagined that what they defended under the name of "principles and of faith" were their prejudices, "their self-interest and their sloth";³ events were to prove to me that it was Catholicism itself. These incidents created a delicate case of conscience and put me in a difficult position. The bishop had told me that priests were complaining of my lectures. I was severely rebuked by venerable brethren who were surprised to find my pupils freed from prejudices they deemed essential. Certain priests,

biographer, writes : "On whom has Renan been able to foist the belief that he has given us his pure, undiluted views on vital questions?" (*Renan* ; 1923 ; p. 310). Nevertheless, Renan has written : "It is incumbent on all who give themselves up to the public to display their ideas to them on all sides" (*Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques*, p. xvii). I have known learned atheists who occupy perfectly independent positions, but who conceal their opinions as carefully as officiating priests.

¹ Paulhan, *Les Transformations Sociales du Sentiment*, p. 157.

² I have been called mad. Whether the accusation has appeared in print I do not know. But M. Salomon Reinach, in one of his works (*Orpheus* ; 1909 and 1924 ; p. 580), described me as "the *enfant terrible* of the party" [modernist] (*A Short History of Christianity* ; 1922 ; p. 198. See *post*, p. 134, the words of Dom Fontenau).

³ I borrow these expressions from a letter written by my lord Isoard, who died Bishop of Annecy. They perfectly express my feelings in those days : "To differ in all one's opinions from those who surround us, to be unable to tell them what one thinks of various situations and even of themselves, to be unable to say to them that, under the name of principles and of faith, they defend their self-interest and their sloth, to be reputed to be one of them and to wear their habit.....all this is very hard !" (Letter from Père Hyacinthe, April 7, 1869, published in *Le P. Hyacinthe dans l'Eglise Romaine*).

who were less frank, incensed the pupils against me, and, as I had partisans, there were riots on the playground during recreation. I resolved to send in my resignation. On November 30 I wrote the following letter to my bishop :—

My Lord,—

A year ago, your Grace, acting as the custodian of Catholic dogma, opposed me at a meeting concerned merely with matters of research. Nevertheless, I considered myself at liberty to publish the work¹ which had called forth so grave a condemnation, and it met with flattering approval. Your Grace yourself, to whom I deemed it fitting to present the first copy of this essay, did not address to me any hostile criticism of it.

A few months later, on the subject of a manuscript which I communicated to the National Society of Agriculture, Science, and Art at Angers, the Procurator of the officialité formally denounced me to your Grace. In consequence of this my faith has been forcibly and persistently attacked.

If I make bold to recall these matters to your Grace, who doubtless has not forgotten them, it is not in order to formulate any reproach of your Grace or of any one else. Every one believed he was doing his duty. I merely wish to explain to your Grace what I consider mine to be, and what has resulted from these discussions.

The desire to justify myself to my own conscience had carried me further in my investigations, and caused me to explore fields to which I had been led by a questionable analogy.

These researches have prompted me to make an inventory of my convictions. Although I have proceeded as a submissive son of the Church, the result is such that I should betray the confidence you still place in me, my lord, were I to remain in the post in which you have done me the honour to maintain me. Consequently, I must offer you my resignation.

I entreat your Grace to permit me either to withdraw into my own family or to go to Germany, in order, while reflecting on other matters, to complete my studies of the language.

Deign to receive the homage of the profound respect with which I am, my lord,

The very humble and very obedient servant
of your Grace.

Here is the reply :—

Port-de-Penne (Lot et Garonne), December 5, 1900.

Reverend Sir,—

Your letter reaches me here in Agenais. I will not postpone my reply until my return to Angers.

¹ My essay, *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité*.

I cannot accept your resignation without conferring with my Council and with the Superior of the Low Seminary. Obviously, your departure in the middle of the academic year would be extremely inconvenient, and, if I were obliged to ask you to remain at your post until the end of the academic year, I am sure I should not make a vain appeal to your devotion.

As for your work on St. René, after carefully examining it, I regret that I cannot authorize its publication, either in volume, in articles, or in *La Revue de la Société des Lettres, Sciences et Arts d'Angers*.

Be assured, Reverend Sir, of my affectionate devotion in our Lord.
† Joseph, Bishop of Angers.

I had written to my bishop in confidence, so to speak, believing that he would summon me (according to his motto, *Pastor et Custos*) to explain more fully, and that I should be able to justify myself. My letter was regarded solely from the administrative point of view, and his Grace submitted it to the deliberations of his Council. The expression "an inventory of my convictions" piqued those gentlemen. They had never heard anything like it. Some members were so agitated that they could not keep the matter secret. As, for many years, priests had been turning Protestant, very perspicacious people concluded that I was about to become a pastor. There was all manner of talk.

I spent my New Year's holidays with my family. They were not gay. My parents were anxious about my future; and the faith of my mother, who was still a devout believer, was troubled by the importance attached to such an absurd legend as St. René's. Fortunately, our home was enlivened by the gaiety of my young brother.

As not the slightest echo of the episcopal council which had been held concerning me ever reached my ears, I deemed it my duty to write my bishop a second letter, this time from Paris. It was not replied to. I returned to my post.

Some time afterwards, one of my friends offered me an appointment in Germany. I refused it in order not to inconvenience the Superior of the Low Seminary.

The rumour soon spread abroad that I should probably be leaving the diocese at Easter, which fell on April 7. Easter approached, and I received no notice of any decision taken concerning me. Three times I went to the bishop's

palace without being received. Once again I wrote to my lord, and with the same result as before.¹

Finally, at my Superior's request, he deigned to grant me an audience on April 3. His Grace refused me permission to go to Germany, alleging that the journey would be dangerous for me. He allowed me to go to my family in Paris, and granted me a *celebret* for six months.

The prelate added to this favour a long lecture on the danger of speaking the truth. He did not mention St. René, but he did refer to Santa Casa—that is, the so-called house of Nazareth, in which Jesus is said to have lived, and which is said to have been miraculously transported to Loretto. He declared that criticism had destroyed this legend, but that the Church maintained it because of the indulgences she was in the habit of granting for pilgrimages to the house. "Loretto," he concluded, "is and will remain one of the most venerated sanctuaries of the Catholic world."

I bore this lecture in silence. All discussion seemed to me useless. I could come to no understanding with my bishop, and his discourse made me fear that if he spoke the truth I should be unable to come to any understanding with the Church.²

On April 16 (1901), during the Easter holidays, I left the Low Seminary, where I had lived for sixteen years—six as pupil, ten as professor. With what apprehensions I was filled by the ocean of the unknown, on which I had now embarked !

¹ My two letters, dated December 30, 1900, and March 24, 1908, are reproduced in *Mes Difficultés*, pp. 24–25.

² My bishop spoke the truth. Benedict XV has decreed that henceforth the Feast of the Translation of our Lady of Loretto shall be celebrated annually, with the most elaborate ritual, in all the dioceses of Italy and of her islands, on December 10, in conformity with the rubric, with the office and the mass approved in the past, by the secular as well as the regular clergy. The authorization to celebrate this festival is granted, under the aforesaid conditions, to all dioceses or congregations whose bishops or superiors shall demand it (*L'Univers*, March 9, 1919). Benedict XV could hardly do otherwise, not merely from the theoretical but also from the practical point of view. In fact, the worship of Loretto is no dead faith but extremely alive—a collecting-box which still brings in money. By a decree dated March 24, 1920, Benedict XV declared and constituted Our Lady of Loretto the chief intercessor with God for all aeronauts. See his letter of August 17, 1922, to Cardinal Gasparri.

At the very time when I was preparing to depart, one of my former pupils,¹ who was staying at Solesmes during Holy week, heard the Father Steward speak these very words :—

Have you heard of M. Houtin ? You know that he was regarded here as a son of the house. Alas ! Some there were who placed too great confidence in him. He wrote very unseemly things about our good father Dom Piolin ; he even attacked our most reverend father Dom Guéranger. But after all, you know him, a mind that goes straight on its way, never troubling about any by-path along which he might arrive at his object. Look at him ever walking straight on, austere and guilelessly. I had always expected what has happened. I am told that he will even go so far as to turn Protestant. That is an exaggeration. No one here believes it. Nevertheless, he has greatly shocked both pupils and parents at Mongazon. Poor gentleman, lack of discernment may lead one far.

I passed on this appreciation to the Superior of the Low Seminary, M. Goupil, congratulating him on the peace that my departure must have restored to him. He replied :—

Busybodies and gossips have grossly exaggerated any inconvenience you may have caused me. To tell you the truth, I have never received complaints from any one. Several times ecclesiastics have asked : “ Is it true that M. Houtin said this or that in his lecture ? ” You may remember that I myself once asked you what had happened in the rhetoric class with regard to Voltaire. Your mistake, if you will permit me to be very frank, was to take up certain agitating, or rather disconcerting, questions. Your astonished pupils, misunderstanding you, made mountains out of molehills. And that gave you your reputation. I know it all very well, for once I myself was called a heretic.²

From the rare consolations and encouragements I received in those days I think I may also quote a letter from my former confessor and the head of my Seminary, M. Baron, who had remained my friend. He wrote :—

You do well to continue the studies for which you have a real aptitude. Publication is a matter of opportunity. Sooner or later truth will conquer. During the last ten or fifteen years we have travelled far. Where shall we be fifteen years hence ? Everything which is mere routine or artifice is destined to fall, but neither will anything in the least like a thesis or a foregone conclusion be

¹ Abbé Paul Loudière, who died in 1921, secretary-general of the diocesan charities of Le Mans.

² Letter of January 5, 1902.

accepted. One of your characteristics is scientific honesty. Hold to it scrupulously.¹

On bidding farewell to the clergy of Anjou (it was to be for ever), I must tell those interested in their condition at that time that a Catholic writer, M. Maurice Brillant, has painted a charming picture of it in his novel entitled *Les Années d'apprentissage de Sylvain Briollet*.² A native of the canton of Segré, brought up in the ecclesiastical college of Combrée, M. Brillant spent one academic year (1900–1901) and perhaps a few months in the High Seminary at Angers. A born man of letters, he began from that year to take those notes which enabled him to describe the curious society in which he was living. Though he has chiefly concentrated on the neighbourhood in which his youth was passed, he has painted its framework to the life—the province itself, “where everything is moderate, where delicacy of spirit is appreciated and not ambition, where the wish to distinguish oneself among men is considered vanity, and where those who attempt it are jeered at cruelly, and, by my faith, not without reason.” He has also described excellently its amiable, witty, rather lazy priests,³ enjoying good cheer and the friendship of the rich, working in the Lord’s vineyard in the good old way, without troubling about the diseases which ravage it, nor thinking of the future. He makes no attempt to hide a slight tendency to scepticism, quite natural since it proceeds from the moderation and delicacy of the race. And, in truth, many priests do not swallow stories that are too strong. I have known several who did not believe either in the legend or even in the existence of St. René. Among my tormentors were some of these. The Church has never lacked that type of servant. They abound in less moderate and less delicate provinces. I have been called upon to meet many.

¹ Letter from Périgueux, December 31, 1901.

² Paris ; published by Bloud, 1921.

³ They were not taught to work.

CHAPTER XI

PARIS

My Relations with my Former Director, the Priest of St. Sulpice—I am Appointed Assistant Priest—Publication of *La Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France au dixième Siècle*—Dismissal.

April, 1901–April, 1902

IN my parents' home I employed my leisure in reading a heap of books I had long desired to examine. I also published a second edition of my essay, *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité*, and in *La Revue de l'Anjou* a reply to Dom Clamard, who had attacked my articles on Canon Bernier. I supported myself by giving lessons to a child.

It was not until two months after my arrival that, on June 18, I went to pay my respects to M. Letourneau, who had become priest of St. Sulpice. My relations with him had grown more intimate since the days at the Seminary when he had been my head. After M. Baron's departure, in 1894, I had chosen him for my confessor, and this he had continued to be until January, 1900, when he was recalled to Paris. It had seemed to me prudent not to visit him immediately after my arrival, for fear of compromising him, as I was said to be a Protestant, and for fear of appearing to solicit some means of earning a livelihood.

He received me stiffly. When he saw that I was not thinking of leaving the Church he unbent, and urged me to come and see him again. I went a month later. He welcomed me cordially and talked to me more frankly. He declared that he believed in the maintenance of traditions—of all traditions—and that consequently he could not approve of my work on St. René. As for my pamphlet, *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité*, he admitted that it pleased him

because it flattered his dear great seventh century. "But, after all," he said, "you are entering on a path which is not without danger for yourself, and which is disturbing for the faithful. If you were to write the history of Biblical controversy as you have written that of the apostolical succession, we should be lost."

These words caused me inexpressible anguish. Did the Biblical question resemble the other? When I recalled the words of my bishop about Loretto,¹ there came to my memory the cry of Proudhon: "The Church does not admit that she may be mistaken, she never corrects a false opinion. Any one who finds her guilty of error is anathematized. Rather than hold out her hand to Justice, she embraces Fate. Wherefore no allowance shall be made for her, and she shall drink to the dregs the cup of her ignorance and her adultery."

Certainly, despite the words of my bishop, I did not believe that the Church never corrects a false opinion, and still less that she anathematizes whomsoever proves her to be in the wrong. As yet I did not even believe that the Church could be guilty of any serious error. But, as the Biblical question was infinitely more important than that of the apostolic succession of French bishops, I wondered whether the heads of the Church knew what they were doing, whether they were not leading the Church into a blind alley, and whether it were not my duty as a priest to enlighten them. How young I was in those days, and how totally I had failed to understand events!

On reflection, I resolved to consult M. Loisy, who was considered the prince of Biblical criticism. I sent him my pamphlet, *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité*, with the following letter, of which I have kept a copy:—

Reverend Sir,—

I should be very much obliged by your examining the pamphlet a copy of which I send you by this post.

At a time when the great controversy on Biblical criticism is opening, I believe it would be edifying to sketch the history of that

¹ See *ante*, chap. x, p. 133.

controversy in France during the century which has just closed. My intention would be to write an essay on this question on the lines of that which I take the liberty to submit to you. For a year this essay has aroused considerable opposition, but it has never been refuted, and everything tends to convince me that it has rendered important service to the cause of truth.

With regard to discussions concerning the Scriptures, might it not be opportune to show to the reading public the evolution of various opinions, the recruiting of controversialists, the nature of the arguments employed, the battles lost and won? You better than any one can judge of the ideas that obsess me.

If you do not wish to take the trouble to give me your opinion in writing, will you be so kind as to tell me when you could see me at Bellevue? I do not know your exact address; nevertheless, I have no doubt that this letter and my pamphlet will reach you.

Deign to accept the homage of the deep respect with which I am, reverend sir,

Your very humble and very devoted servant.

His reply was the following :—

Bellevue (31 Boulevard Verd de Saint-Julien),

Sir,—

July 27, 1901.

I have just read your pamphlet with the deepest interest. There can certainly be no doubt that it would in itself be well for the Biblical question to be treated on the same lines as that of the apostolic succession of the French churches. But there is no need for me to tell you that the Biblical question is far more serious than that of the apostolic succession of the Churches, and that one runs much greater risk in dealing with it frankly. Biblical criticism does not excite that noble wrath which gladdened you in the valiant champions of "our traditions"; it inspires a fear which is expressed not so much in refutation as in measures of violence. Rome has assumed, at least in appearance, an attitude hostile to criticism. High personages, who have maintained the rights of historical criticism in such matters as the apostolic succession of the Churches, are ready to sacrifice those rights when it is a question of the Holy Scriptures. There are certain shrewd people who in their own minds subscribe to the most audacious conclusions, but who all the same pose as orthodox, censoring and officially denouncing those who openly say even a part of what they themselves secretly think. The subject is certainly one of the most difficult to deal with.

If you have the courage to undertake it, and if I can give you any information, I am entirely at your service. I shall be at Bellevue all through the holidays, except between August 5 and 20. If you wish to see me, choose any day you like. But in order to make sure of me, send me a word, giving me some idea of the time and the day when you will call, so that you may not make a fruitless journey.

Be good enough to receive, Sir, the expression of my respectful sentiments.

A. LOISY.

I flew to M. Loisy. It was the visit of a secret disciple to a venerated master. For six years I had been following his review with attention ; I had read nearly all his books. He hardly did more than repeat what he had said in his letter. But it was enough to set me to work immediately.

At this juncture, on August 30, a friend offered me a very suitable chaplaincy in the diocese of Cologne. I had to reply by return of post. I asked my bishop's permission. He replied, sending me a *celebret* for the Cologne diocese on September 2—too late.

Some time afterwards, M. Letourneau said to me : " You have no appointment. I have a vacancy in my church—that of assistant priest. The Archbishop is quite capable of sending me some ex-convict. You I know. Will you take the post ? "

It is obvious that the proposal proceeded less from the affection my former director was thought to bear towards me than from his anxiety for the credit of his administration. Moreover, M. Letourneau wished to make me work at a second edition of the history of his church and at the history of his company.¹ I had already made researches for one of his books while I was at Angers ; and in the previous year, during the holidays, I had written a memorandum for him on the blunders of a writer hostile to Sulpicians, the Abbé Jean-Baptiste Aubry, which had been greatly appreciated. The society of Saint-Sulpice was at that time much troubled by the accusations of those who were trying to reform the teaching in seminaries. It was particularly perturbed by a recent letter from the Archbishop of Rouen, Monseigneur Fuzet.

Later, M. Letourneau asserted that when accepting the appointment of assistant priest in his church I had " promised him, for the sake of the society to which he belonged, not to

¹ *Histoire de l'Eglise de Saint-Sulpice*, by M. Charles Hamel, diocesan architect.

publish anything which might, even indirectly, cause him embarrassment." I have already, in 1903,¹ denied having made any such promise. It may be that quite vaguely I promised "to be good"; but, when using such an expression, I never dreamt of renouncing all liberty of thought or of expression. Otherwise I should not have accepted the post, which, by the way, was not at all attractive.

The writer Joris-Karl Huysmans, reproducing widespread prejudices, has given a somewhat caustic description of the office of assistant priest :—

In addition to the parish priest, the officiating priest, and the curates, there are assistant priests in every church. It is they who do most of the work, who celebrate early mass, when every one is asleep, and late mass, when every one is digesting. It is they who get up at night to take the sacrament to the poor, who keep vigil over the wealthy dead, who catch cold through draughts in porches and at funerals, who have sunstrokes in cemeteries, who are soaked with rain or covered with snow as they stand at the graveside. They appropriate all the disagreeable duties. For five or ten francs, they replace better-salaried brethren eager to delegate their work. The majority are in disgrace. One way of getting rid of them is to attach them to a church, where they are supervised before being deprived of their *celebret* or dismissed.

In spite of what Huysmans says, the body of assistant priests is not more mixed than that of the parish clergy. Certainly there may be among them persons who are good for nothing; but is the hierarchy itself free from these? There may be among them priests as virtuous as elsewhere. They have often fallen into this position merely through a lack of that spirit of intrigue or ambition which the best ecclesiastics are capable of blending with their piety.

The appointment I was offered at St. Sulpice brought in about two hundred francs a month. It involved an almost daily fast, which on mass or burial or grand wedding days frequently lasted till one o'clock. Prolonged ceremonies often occupied the whole morning.

Such was the reward of a youth of ardent and disinterested labour. I was experiencing the truth of a remark

¹ See my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, p. 161.

made in 1863 by Père Hyacinthe de Vabroger to Mgr. Landriot : " In the lamentable condition of our poor Church in France, a priest who desires to consecrate himself entirely to the study of ecclesiastical lore loses caste." Nevertheless, far from complaining, I esteemed myself fortunate. Humble as it was, this appointment seemed to me an opportunity, and even, since I had no claim to it, a real favour.

It was in January, 1902, that the Archbishop appointed me assistant priest,¹ just at the time when I had finished my MS. on *La Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France au XIX^{ième} siècle*, and had arranged for its publication by M. Alphonse Picard.

The book appeared on March 17. For months it brought me the warmest congratulations. Of the numerous letters I received I will quote but one, which may interest those who are engaged in ecclesiastical studies :—

Washington, May 31, 1902.

DEAR SIR,—

Though I have not the honour of knowing you except through your recent work, *La Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France*, this book pleases me and many others so much that I take the liberty of sending you a word of hearty congratulation from the other side of the Atlantic. As you also do not know me, I may tell you by way of introduction that I am an American, a former pupil at St. Sulpice in Paris (1885-6) and at the Procura at Rome (1887-8), and a Sulpician. At Rome and at la Solitude² I knew M. Arthur Clain of Angers (now professor of dogma at the High Seminary of Orléans), and we became great friends. I mention this detail in case you should happen to know this good Sulpician, who, it may be said in passing, lives much less exclusively in the atmosphere of the Middle Ages than do the majority of his brethren. After having taught dogma in the High Seminary of Montreal for seven years, I was transferred to the Seminary of New York, where I taught Scripture, and at present (since last September) I hold, in collaboration with another confrère, M. Gigot,³ the post of Head of the Ecole Saint Augustin, which is a Sulpician school for the United States, established near the Catholic University of Washington.

I, like M. Gigot, am very interested in Biblical criticism—he has

¹ At that time my parents and I took our household goods to the Rue Duguay-Trouin, close to the church which I was to serve.

² The St. Sulpice House of Novices.

³ He died in 1921, professor of divinity in the diocesan seminary of New York.

been professor of divinity for twenty years ; but, unlike many others, he has kept in touch with things ; and you will probably guess to what school we belong, by the very fact that we are so pleased with your work. In any case, I send you by to-day's mail a copy of M. Gigot's last work, his critical introduction to the study of the Old Testament—a work which, although moderate and even reticent at times, takes into account the present stage of Biblical criticism, and speaks plainly on the subject of M. Vigouroux's textbook, which has become a classic !!! But, as controversy between Catholics on questions of Biblical criticism appears more bitter in France than anywhere else, M. Gigot has never permitted any review of his book to appear in French periodicals. He has resolved to hold aloof from such venomous discussions. To any one really well informed and not given to wearing blinkers (as do so many professors in French seminaries, even in l'Institut Catholique !), it is obvious that the fundamental truth at the bottom of all this criticism is as certain to prevail as was the hotly-contested theory of Galileo. The attitude of reactionaries resembles that of a few old women on the shore attempting to beat back the advancing tide with their brooms.

However it may be, your study of the question comes just in the nick of time, and will render great service to the cause of Catholic knowledge. In such matters there is nothing so useful as a simple statement of facts—in controversy one is so inclined to neglect them. By thus tracing the progress of the discussion through its various stages, you have deserved well of all true friends of knowledge, and I congratulate you very cordially.

We should like to see this work translated into English ; and, if you have no other arrangement in view, I would ask your permission to translate it, or at least to make an adaptation, which would be practically a translation *in extenso*. I mean that perhaps it would be better to adapt or condense certain passages in a translation made for the United States and England, since the book deals only with the question in France, and on the other hand it might be advisable to add a few notes, either to explain certain circumstances not quite intelligible to English readers, or to refer in passing to certain phases of the controversy outside France.

I entreat you therefore, dear Sir, to be so kind as to let me know as soon as possible whether you agree to my request.

Naturally, if the work is to be translated in England, I should not undertake it here.

Should you wish to know more about me, you could inquire of M. Felix Klein (of l'Institut Catholique), my classmate ; of M. Monier, SS. Superior of l'Ecole Saint-Jean ; or even of M. Loisy, although he does not know me well. If you consent to my undertaking the translation, I entreat you not to mention my name in public, for at St. Sulpice just now they are suffering from an attack of nervous and reactionary orthodoxy, which in certain aspects is like an aggravated

state of constipation, but which also, in certain of its manifestations (oracular opinions, letters, admonitions, etc.), assumes the form of diarrhoea. One must be content with *le Manuel Biblique* and the works of Fillion !!! and beware of "Protestant infiltrations" !!! And our apologists, who are so orthodox, where do they get a large number of their arguments from if not from Protestants, as you point out so well ?

Be kind enough to pardon this rough-and-ready letter, and believe me

Yours very sincerely in God,¹

JAMES F. DRISCOLL.

If my book brought me acceptable congratulations, it had other and very unpleasant results. On the very day of its publication I naturally sent a copy to M. Letourneau. On the very next day he informed me that it annoyed and displeased him extremely.

On April 1 he told the Archbishop that he could not keep me in his church, and asked that I might be moved to another parish. The Cardinal dismissed me absolutely. When communicating this decision to me the next day, the proctor of the officialité, M. Peuportier, added that never should I be appointed to another post in the diocese of Paris. He was merely transmitting to me the decision of his superior.

Some time before, soon after his appointment, M. Peuportier had had to deal with two serious cases. The priest of one of the most important parishes in Paris was convicted of concubinage, his senior curate of sodomy. The archiepiscopal council resolved to shut its eyes to the vicar's case ; the curate was sent some little distance away from the scene of his exploits, and relegated to quite a comfortable post.

Evidently I deserved harder treatment than they. My intellectual curiosity was more dangerous than their violations of discipline. I do not complain of these facts ; I merely note them in order to complete the picture of the Catholic system. After having informed me of my dismissal, M. Peuportier

¹ Events prevented the materialization of his plan of translation. Mr. Driscoll died in 1923, priest of a rich and important parish in New York State. He suffered much in the Church, both intellectually and morally. Having lost all theological belief, he took a passionate interest in spiritualism and in psychical research.

was kind enough to advise me to ask for a post in the diocese of Versailles, which was short of priests.

A few days later I received the following letter :—

Bishopric of Angers. Saint-Hilaire du Bois (on circuit),
 REVEREND SIR,— April 10, 1902.

I learn with the deepest sorrow that you have just committed a grave offence against ecclesiastical discipline by publishing without an *imprimatur* a work on Biblical criticism, which by seriously-minded persons is considered rash and reprehensible.

You have done this without saying a single word about it to the priest of St. Sulpice, who had welcomed you into his church with kindness, and whom you had promised, for the sake of the society to which he belongs, to publish nothing which might even indirectly cause him embarrassment. In order that the reputation of St. Sulpice for sound doctrine may remain above suspicion, he, to his great regret, has been compelled to make this state of things known to the Archbishop, and to ask for your dismissal from the post of assistant priest at St. Sulpice.

This painful situation imposes on me a double duty—that of blaming you for a very regrettable publication, and that of recalling you to Angers. You will be kind enough to take measures to place yourself at my disposal without delay, otherwise I shall be obliged to deprive you of your *celebret*, and to inform the Archbishop of Paris.

Accept, Reverend Sir, the assurance of the sentiments of my devotion in our Lord.

† JOSEPH, Bishop of Angers.

This letter did not find me in Paris. It reached me in Anjou, whither I had just gone to my brother, who had fallen dangerously ill in my sister's house. Immediately I sent the bishop the following reply :—

MY LORD,—

April 14, 1902.

I have just received your letter, and I hasten without delay to assure your Grace that I am, and that I have always been, at your full and complete disposal. Deign to accept the homage of the profound respect with which I am the very humble and very obedient servant of your Grace.

I think it my duty to make certain observations concerning the letter which his Grace did me the honour to write to me. According to the strict discipline of the Church, no book—absolutely none—ought to be published without the permission of the bishop in whose diocese it appears. But the secularization of society and the development of knowledge have compelled the Church to limit its pretensions ; it now

concentrates especially on the supervision of works treating of philosophy, theology, and the Scriptures.

By its title alone my book seemed subject to this rule. Nevertheless, it did not in any way propose to expound the Bible ; it set forth no system of interpretation, not even on any particular point ; it carefully left on one side all dogmatic questions, and confined itself to relating incontrovertible facts. It was, therefore, no book of theology nor of exegesis, but of history ; and to lay stress on this, so that there should be no possibility of mistake, I had taken as a motto for the book this extract from Leo XIII's letter on history : "The first law of history is not to venture to lie ; the second not to be afraid to tell the truth ; in addition to which the historian should not lend himself either to suspicion, flattery, or animosity."

I thought that these papal words constituted a sufficient *imprimatur* for a simple story, written without "animosity," and intended to serve as a discreet and respectful warning. I was wrong. It may not be irrelevant to recall that hitherto I had published all my books without an *imprimatur*. I had solicited and obtained it for my *Dom Couturier*, but I had taken care not to let it appear on the book. As for my other pamphlets, I had published them, as I have said, against the wish of my bishop, yet without his threatening me with a law which appeared to be falling into abeyance.

The bishop considered my book "rash" and "reprehensible" on the authority of "seriously-minded persons." These "seriously-minded persons" were M. Letourneau and the Sulpicians who were on his side. Now, the warmest congratulations I had received came from Sulpician professors of divinity, M. Gigot, Mr. Driscoll, and others—very differently qualified to judge it from M. Letourneau.

CHAPTER XII

IN SEARCH OF AN ECCLESIASTICAL APPOINTMENT

When He is in Want of Bread—Following the Star—My Brother's Death.

April–October, 1902

AFTER having been duly notified of my recall to the diocese of Angers, I returned to Paris to arrange for my removal, so as to be able to go without delay whithersoever it pleased my lord to send me. On my way through the episcopal town I was able to see his Grace. I attempted to justify myself. But, as my explanations appeared to him impregnated with the spirit of free thought, I did not insist. "A bishop does not discuss, does not refute; he condemns," said Monseigneur Rumeau.¹

On leaving the bishopric, I went to see one of my former colleagues at the seminary who lived near by, one of the most reasonable and upright men I have ever known, the Abbé Pierre Coutolleau, who died in 1922 dean of the faculty of letters in the Catholic university.² His opinions were inspiring (like those of the Abbé Paul Lejay, his colleague of Paris). I felt the need of hearing him after his Grace. I told him of the call I had just paid, and he informed me that the Bishop had said of me, in a tone by no means anxious: "When he lacks bread he will be obliged to return."³

¹ I told M. Loisy of this saying, and it amused him so much that he could not refrain from quoting it in *Autour d'un petit livre* (p. xx). It is hardly necessary to say that it had been uttered quite naturally as the pure expression of episcopal law, and without the remotest idea that in the twentieth century such a declaration might provoke a smile.

² He used to say of himself: "I have made it a law never to be guided by anything but reason"—words cited in his funeral sermon preached on January 31 by Mgr. Pasquier.

³ I must ask the reader to notice that I merely relate what my friend told me. I never thought of asking him whether he had himself heard these words.

These words amused me, and we laughed over them. "Our holy bishop," I said to Coutolleau, "does not know men." And, indeed, his administration proved it—as, for example, the inferior post in which he allowed my friend to remain.¹ Further, the saying was orthodox, like everything that our holy bishop thought; I had heard it maintained by priests who were not liberals; I had found its equivalent coming from the pen of the excellent Dom Gauthey, who wrote of one of his escaped monks: "When he has reached the *et nemo illi dabat* and when his shoes give way....."²

A few days after my return to Paris the courage to go back to my diocese, where my opinions had been made a scandal of and persistently denounced, began to fail me. How could my ministrations, when suspected and decried, have any good results? On May 7 I laid my anxiety before the bishop.³ He did not reply. On the 14th a vicar-general informed me of my appointment to the living of Saint-Melaine, a district of Ponts-de-Cé, with the request that I would go to my parish as soon as possible. The conferring of this appointment did not look as if I were out of favour. Even had it appeared otherwise, I was ready to go, and I began to pay my farewell calls. Nevertheless, it seemed to me more and more clearly that my obedience would avail nothing.

Several persons, notably the proctor of the Paris officialité, had advised me to put myself at the service of the Bishop of Versailles, who needed priests. In this diocese I might be able to begin a new life. The idea attracted me. I suggested it to my bishop.⁴ I was naturally obliged to tell my poor brother that I was not going to Saint-Melaine, and that I was soliciting a living in the diocese of Versailles. He approved, and even, without my knowledge, had written

¹ If M. Coutolleau died dean of the faculty, it was because he had been appointed by the council of bishops who administered the Catholic university, and not by the diocesan bishop, who in the general administration of the university bears the purely honorary title of chancellor.

² Letter of January 30, 1887, to Dom Couturier about Dom Menault.

³ Letter published in *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque*, pp. 35-6.

⁴ Letters of May 15 and 17, 1902, published in *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque*, pp. 37-9.

a letter to the Bishop of Angers to support my request. The following is the reply to all this correspondence :—

Bishopric of Angers.

Angers, May 19, 1902.

REVEREND SIR,—

Your fears astonish me, and I find it hard to explain them. You give as a reason for not returning to your diocese of Angers "the difficult position in which you may be placed by the fact that you hold views which differ widely from those of the immense majority of priests in the diocese." But it seems to me that all priests in *all* dioceses can hardly be expected to hold identical views on matters concerning the ecclesiastical spirit, the sacerdotal life, and the pastoral ministry.

You refer to disappointments and disillusion. I fail to see what can have occasioned them here. God grant that you do not find them in even greater abundance outside your native province.

Nevertheless, you seem to attach so much importance to entering the diocese of Versailles that I do not wish to exercise my authority to prevent you. However, I make one condition, dictated by the most elementary administrative wisdom—viz., that you shall be incorporated in your new diocese. With this object I am prepared to give you letters of incorporation with the good recommendation which your life as a priest deserves.

I am obliged to fill up the living of Saint-Melaine without delay ; I cannot wait until the end of your negotiations. But if they culminate in your return here, I will find you another post.

Accept, Reverend Sir, the assurance of the sentiment of my devotion in our Lord.

† JOSEPH, Bishop of Angers.

"You refer," wrote my bishop, "to 'disappointments and disillusion.' I fail to see what can have occasioned them here." Alas ! he more than any one had occasioned them, especially when he avowed that the Church had erred (with regard to Loretto), but that she could never admit it.¹ Oh ! my Lord, you appeared not to understand when I ventured to speak to you of "disappointments" and of "disillusion." Nevertheless, nearly all priests have experienced them, and you must know it. Disillusions—why, they are the life of any priest who cannot through auto-suggestion turn himself into what the Church calls a saint.

Inspired by pious mothers, who guide their steps to the

¹ See chap. x, p. 133.

sanctuary, good little children set out to follow the star. Like the magi of the first gospel, they saw the star of the King of the Jews, and they went forth to worship him. The star went before them, and they were filled with a very great joy. The Levite's journey is longer than that of the magi, and his joy is mingled. He enters the Low Seminary, where he is subjected to the influence of suggestion, and where the priesthood is constantly praised to him as the fount of honour, of glory, and the splendour of life. But outside these sermons how prosaic is his initiation ! Instead of the divine knowledge of which he had dreamed, there is served up to him a repellent scholasticism ; and when, with all its strength, his mind tries to develop, it is repressed and stunted. He perseveres ; youth is tenacious and confiding, and recruiters represent his disappointment as a providential trial of faith. His enlistment is achieved, and the Levite endeavours to live on "the supernatural" until the moment when, unless his intellect has become too enfeebled, he is compelled to recognize that he does not even possess "the natural" which is founded on human reason ; until the moment when, if he has not already divined it for himself, and if the system on which he has been educated has not killed his love of truth, the bishop, the recognized and official doctor of the Roman Church, will undertake to show him what the Church understands by "Catholic truth."

"Cursed be the day," said an eminent priest to me—"cursed be the day when my office brought me into touch with bishops."

The bishop who undertook to disillusion me was good. He was kind enough to wish to keep me in his diocese. He was prepared to admit that a favourable recommendation was due to me as far as my life as a priest was concerned ; he even offered it ; but when he attached to my permission to emigrate to another diocese the condition that I should be incorporated in it he somewhat limited his kindness.

Incorporation consists in the admission to the body of the clergy of a certain diocese of a priest who is outside that diocese. Generally bishops lend their priests to one another

without their ceasing to belong to their original diocese. They are not incorporated. If a priest has been guilty of some act which renders his continuance in his diocese impossible, the bishop always finds him some small appointment at a distance which will permit him to earn a livelihood and rehabilitate himself; but this emigrant is not incorporated in the diocese in which he has taken refuge. His being received into it is condescension enough; he must not ask for anything more. Every bishop retains the responsibility for his ne'er-do-wells, and, as he does not generally give away his best, the priest who goes to a prelate with a request for incorporation goes with a bad testimonial.

These things being so, it seemed to me likely that the diocesan administration of Versailles would not grant my request. Nevertheless, I determined to try, while doing everything I could to facilitate matters. In order to avoid objections, I asked for a small living,¹ the two last incumbents of which had edified their parishioners so little that the bishop had left it vacant for five years. In selecting this appointment I had a double object—to show the bishop that I was not ambitious, and to avoid providing the other priests of the diocese with any cause for discontent or envy. A neighbouring priest and the senior priest of the district supported my request. I began negotiations without much hope, and I went to Anjou to await the issue, with my beloved brother, who was in the last stage of illness.

He died in my arms, while I was watching alone by his bedside. Conscious that he was about to enter the mystery of death, he made a great and solemn sign of the cross on his body; then he looked at me affectionately and gravely. "The eye," said Lamartine, "has its own language, especially when it is about to be extinguished."

On July 1, a vicar-general at Versailles, M. Leblanc, announced to me the following decision: "My lord charges me to tell you he regrets that he cannot offer you any post in his diocese. We have just had a large ordination, and

¹ Bonneuil, near Gonesse.

his Grace desires first to find appointments for his young priests."¹

A few days later, another incident occurred. The priest of Saint-Sulpice had written to my bishop that I had broken my promise to him by publishing my book on *La Question Biblique*. Not wishing to let so inexact a statement pass unnoticed, I wrote to M. Letourneau to put things right. I regret not having kept a copy of my letter. This is his reply :—

Paris, July 11.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

I cannot see the object of your letter. You admit that you had promised me to be prudent and not to cause any annoyance at Saint-Sulpice. That is amply sufficient.

I never dreamed of the renunciation to which you refer, and you know it well.

Accept, my dear friend, my sentiments of devotion.

G. LETOURNEAU.

These were the last words I ever received from my former master and director, whom I had greatly loved, and who had played an important part in my life through the share he took in my decision to enter the Church.

Meanwhile my book, *La Question Biblique*, was making its way. The press was favourable, with one or two exceptions.²

The first in date and in importance was in a periodical with the strange title, *La Vérité Française*. As early as April 7 it published an article beginning thus: "An ex-Benedictine monk, at present assistant priest in a large Parisian parish, has just published a book, which we will not name for fear of giving it an ill-deserved advertisement. This book, full of praise of the Abbé Loisy and his school, is certainly one of the worst with which ecclesiastical history has been adorned for some time."

The rest of the article was devoted to the Abbé Klein,³

¹ The living I had solicited, as well as several others, remained for many years without an incumbent.

² The chief reviews of my book are reproduced in the second edition, which appeared in the November of this year—1902.

³ Concerning this personage, see *l'Américanisme*.

who could not have failed to be mentioned, since its writer, Charles Maignen, was his personal enemy.¹ Readers were certainly not very fully informed as to the book's contents, though they were sufficiently enlightened as to its author.

As I have said, both clergy and their flocks are prejudiced against assistant priests. Consequently, the Abbé Maignen deemed it well to declare that I was one, and that I was also "an ex-Benedictine monk"—that is to say, doubtless, one who had broken his vows. An unfrocked monk, who, on leaving his holy and scholarly order, can do nothing better than become an assistant priest, cannot be a very forceful personage.

Such was the information that *La Vérité Française* gave to its pious readers; such were the conclusions that it suggested to them concerning me. These polemics were to produce their effect, as will soon be seen. Meanwhile the information given by the Abbé Maignen was immediately and carefully utilized by such controversialists as Father Ferdinand Prat² and Monseigneur Battifol.³

My *celebret*—that is, my permission to celebrate mass—expired in September. I was obliged, therefore, to ask my bishop to be so kind as to extend it. On August 14 I wrote to him, and took the opportunity to entreat him to allow me to earn my livelihood as I could, by giving lessons or accepting a tutorship.

At this juncture I was told of a chaplaincy that was vacant in an orphanage kept by Daughters of Charity, at Bellevue, in the diocese of Versailles. Persons of influence made great efforts to obtain it for me. In two letters I asked my bishop's permission to apply. He authorized me to do so, adding that if I failed I must return to the diocese of Angers.

On September 2, I wrote to the bishop of Versailles.⁴ On the seventh, his vicar-general, M. Leblanc, sent the

¹ See *l'Américanisme*.

² *Études*, published by Fathers of the Company of Jesus, December 5, 1902, p. 632.

³ *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, January, 1903, p. 21. For Mgr. Battifol, see *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*.

⁴ Mgr. Goux, who died April 28, 1904.

following note to the priest¹ who had kindly recommended me : " You have recommended to my lord, for the chaplaincy of the orphanage, a M. Houtin. My lord would be obliged if you would let him know whether this ecclesiastic is not an ex-Benedictine, the author of pamphlets and works on Biblical criticism which have recently appeared."

I sent my friend the information required. A few days later, M. Leblanc informed me that my application was refused, and he advised me, in my own interest, " to seek a situation in another diocese."

The *Vérité Française* article had not been forgotten by these officials of the diocese of Versailles. That was sufficient for them, and they were themselves quite sure how far my " pamphlets and works on Biblical criticism " were from the truth. In the same way, when the Archbishop of Paris had dismissed me, neither his Eminence nor any one at the palace had read my book ; neither had my bishop examined the work when, as a punishment for having published it, he recalled me to his diocese. It sufficed that " serious minds " possessing the monopoly of orthodoxy had declared it " rash " and " reprehensible"—one of " the worst with which ecclesiastical history has been adorned for a long while."

From the time that my application was refused I was faced by the command to return immediately to Anjou.

Was my place in a diocese where certain priests were so passionately in favour of such a futile legend as that of St. René, and where dogmatic episcopacy was in such a state of ferment as to assert that without the Pope there would be neither episcopacy nor priesthood ?

I wrote the following letter :—

Paris, September 15, 1902.

MY LORD,—

I regret to inform you that the negotiation for which I solicited your Grace's permission has failed. Your Grace, in the case of such an event, had reiterated your command to me to return immediately to your diocese under penalty of being deprived of the right to say mass.

It is with great sorrow that I see matters come to this pass. If, nevertheless, I do not feel called upon to obey, I entreat your Grace

¹ M. A. Renusson, priest of Bellevue.

to consider that it is not on account of wounded *amour propre* ; it is because my return would be the sign for renewed annoyance, and because within a short time I should again be compelled to leave. Sincerity would render my position untenable.

As the refusal to renew my *celebret* practically amounts to dismissal, I entreat your Grace to recognize that it is impossible for me to remain in this ignominious position without giving detailed explanations and justifications to my family and to persons whose esteem I value. Consequently, I am constrained to publish notes and documents relative to my dismissal. I venture to think that you will have no objection to their publication, which will be in perfect accord with the sentiments of profound respect with which I have the honour to be, my lord, the very humble and very obliged servant of your Grace.

After having waited a fortnight for a reply, I wrote another letter :—

Paris, September 29, 1902.

MY LORD,—

I am grieved beyond expression that my last letter should have remained unanswered, and, at the risk of seeming importunate to your Grace, for fear there should be misunderstanding on your Grace's part or error on mine, I believe it my duty to explain my views.

If I do not return to the diocese of Angers, it is entirely through fear lest I might not give your Grace that satisfaction which your Grace has a right to expect from priests under your direction. But my intention is, wherever I may be, to work for the Church as I have always done and as far as I am able.

If I have not been useful and truthful, let it be proved to me, and I will willingly acknowledge my fault and correct it. Nevertheless, I do not think that hitherto I have failed to render good service by trying to prove that, whatever may be said, there is still room in the Church for intelligent and sincere people. I do not believe, either, that I can be accused of disobedience. The canonical obedience which the priest promises his bishop on the day of his ordination is by no means the strict vow of religious obedience.

Finally, I have always believed that the power transmitted by our Lord to his apostles was a paternal and benevolent authority, having as its only justification and object the good of souls and of all souls. It is this conviction which gives me the courage once again to present to you my request.

Deign to receive the homage of the profound respect with which I am, my Lord, the very humble and obliged servant of your Grace.

Here is the reply :—

Bishopric of Angers.

Angers, October 2, 1902.

REVEREND SIR,—

My conscience compels me to tell you that the views expressed in

your letters, especially in the two last, cause me great grief and fill me with anxiety for your state of mind.

There is room in the Church, you say, for intelligent and sincere people. I agree ; but more especially is there room for the humble and obedient.

You desire to measure the degree of obedience promised on the day of your ordination. Nevertheless, you cannot question the right of your Bishop to this obedience when he wishes to keep you in his diocese. And if I insist on your return, it is doubtless because I recognize that you are capable of performing your functions in the future as in the past ; it is also, permit me to tell you, through solicitude for your soul as a priest. I cannot permit you to be a priest out of work, a prey to the uncertainties of an objectless existence. I have been long-suffering, you must admit, and indulgent also in allowing you to seek, and to seek again, a post according to your taste. If you have not succeeded, it is not my fault. I am willing to carry my indulgence to the utmost limit, and to grant you a new *celebret* for six months, in order that you may continue your search for an appointment in a diocese of your own choosing. But if at the end of these six months—that is to say, on April 1—you are still out of work, that will be the extreme limit. You must return here and put yourself at my disposal to accept any appointment I think suitable for you. If—and God grant that it may not be so—you do not obey me, then you will reduce me to the disagreeable but unavoidable necessity of refusing to prolong your *celebret*, and then, no more than to-day, shall I permit you to publish what you call the notes justifying your conduct. Moreover, you know very well that a priest ought not to publish anything without the *imprimatur* of the bishop of the see in which he resides.

Receive, Reverend Sir, the assurance of the sentiments of my devotion in our Lord.

† JOSEPH, Bishop of Angers.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CLERGY OF PARIS IN A CRITICAL POSITION

Exchange of Calls and Confidences—Marcel Hébert—My Bishop Condemns my Book on Biblical Criticism, and Refuses me a *Celebret*.

1902-1903

MY book on Biblical criticism brought me numerous letters and callers. I received congratulations, insults, and requests for explanation. Quite a number of persons, who described themselves as troubled about their faith in Catholicism and in Christianity, asked for my opinion and counsel. That among them were certain spies of the janissaries of orthodoxy I have every reason to believe. Priests eager to know so audacious a *confrère* came to see what I was like, and unburdened themselves of interesting confidences concerning the convictions of certain apologists (French and foreign) whom they knew intimately. Some ecclesiastics, who said they were struck by my talents as a controversialist, and who wished me well, advised me to engage in anti-Protestantism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Freemasonry. "You would render us the greatest services," they said. "Why do you not oppose the enemies of the Church?" They frowned when I replied: "The only enemies of the Church of whom I have had any experience hitherto are those who organize and exploit pious lying."

Among the first and warmest congratulations that were addressed to me were those of one whose visiting card bore the name of "The Abbé Marcel Hébert, Honorary Canon of Bayeux, formerly Principal of the Ecole Fénelon." They were the beginning of an intimacy that lasted till his death—that is, fourteen years.

M. Hébert, accused of heresy, had just been dismissed

from an honourable post and from the priesthood. He had no independent means. From a situation in which he was fairly well paid, and from the prospect of a great future he was plunged into poverty, and lost many powerful friends much desired by the Parisian clergy. His case aroused bitter feeling among his *confrères*; various rumours of it reached me. We were then passing through a time which I have described as "the anarchy of dogma."¹ The Paris clergy indulged even in the sacristy in talk so free and so irreverent as to be almost incredible. The affair was the object of sharp commentary. Certain priests vehemently denounced the intransigence of M. Hébert in refusing to retract. It would have been so simple for him to have saved the situation by signing a formula! Others denounced the intransigence of the archbishop in depriving the clergy of the services of a distinguished man. Others inclined to the opinion of an eminent priest who said some years later: "If we have lost our faith we are not obliged to tell everybody."

The discussions provoked by M. Hébert's dismissal extended not merely outside the sphere of Catholic orthodoxy, but outside that of Christianity; they turned on Deism, Spiritualism, certitude of knowledge. Priests discussed boldly, profoundly, the great question: "Can one remain a Catholic, a Christian, a believer, without sacrificing one's reason?" Those who replied in the negative continued their ministry none the less.

In my province I had known good, timid priests who, for fear of thinking wrong, hardly ventured to think at all, and shrewd priests who felt that "if one touches anything, everything falls."² In Paris I knew priests who thought more freely than numbers of freethinkers, and who continued none the less to defend the Church professionally with great zeal. I knew unpractical priests who wanted to reconcile "the Church and the time-spirit," dogma and science, and,

¹ *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, p. 68. See also M. Loisy, in his *Choses Passées*, p. 231: "I saw that intellectual anarchy was beginning to overtake even the Catholic clergy."

² See above, p. 129.

like Père Hyacinthe in earlier days, "to reconcile authority and liberty, celibacy and love."¹

While these new acquaintances proved to me the seriousness and the intensity of the religious crisis, M. Loisy carried the agitation to its culminating point by publishing his book, *l'Evangile et l'Eglise*, in November, 1902. This work let loose a veritable tempest in the ecclesiastical world. At that very time I was publishing a second edition of my *Question Biblique*, and the success which this re-issue met with was another element of discord. The powder was fired by the Abbé Dabry, who published an extremely good article on my book in his paper. The writer was a priest of the diocese of Autun, the Abbé Grosjean.² His bishop, Cardinal Perraud, condemned the article as "dangerous to faith, damaging to the Church, and likely to shock priests and faithful."³ This pronouncement was received with pleasure in various directions. It appeared in *La Semaine Religieuse* of Angers.⁴ As the Cardinal had made no allusion either to me or to my work, the official periodical of my diocese added this information: "The article condemned was on the subject of a book by the Abbé Houtin."

The campaign continued. To restrain Catholics who might have been tempted to speak or to write in favour of my work, it was announced that it had been censored at Rome. On January 18, *La Vérité Française*, referring to "the republication of that bad book by the ex-Benedictine Houtin," borrowed from *La Semaine Religieuse* of Cambrai this item of news: "We learn on good authority that the

¹ Cf. *Le Père Hyacinthe dans l'Eglise Romaine*, p. 292. Among the principal ecclesiastics whose acquaintance I made at that time, and who contributed to the evolution of my thought, I think I may mention without being indiscreet, since they are dead, Vincent Ermoni, Pierre Dabry, and Alexandre de Meissas. I have given some of my reminiscences of Ermoni in my *Histoire du Modernisme*, of Dabry in my *Prêtre Symboliste*, of Meissas in *La Crise du Clergé*. M. de Meissas left me all his papers, and in his will charged me to make him known as the author of *Les Ephémérides de la Papauté*, published in 1904 under the pseudonym of Jean Vrai (Fischbacher and Emile Nourry).

² On the subject of M. Grosjean consult my essay on Cardinal Perraud in *Evêques et Diocèses*, 1st series (3rd edition, 1908).

³ On these incidents cf. *La Question Biblique au xxième Siècle*, chap. v.

⁴ Issue of December 28, 1902.

Abbé Houtin's book has been put on the *Index*."¹ Abroad, papers corresponding to *La Vérité Française* supported these proceedings.²

All the agitation which it was attempted to foment around my book was effaced by *l'Évangile et l'Eglise*. The Archbishop of Paris, on the report of a Commission charged to examine this work, forbade the reading of it by the clergy and the faithful of his diocese. The Archbishop of Cambrai, the Bishops of Autun, of Nancy, of Perpignan, supported this sentence, and promulgated it in their dioceses.

At this juncture I received the following letter :—

Angers, February 6, 1903.

The Palace.

REVEREND SIR,—

My lord charges me to send you the enclosed Ordinance on the subject of your book, *La Question Biblique*.

It is not without very great sorrow that his Grace has brought himself to take this measure, but his conscience prescribed it as an imperious duty.

Receive, Reverend Sir, the assurance of my devotion in Our Lord.

J. LABONNE.

Here is the "enclosed ordinance" :—

We, Joseph Renneau, by divine mercy and the authority of the Holy See, bishop of Angers.

(1) Having confided to a competent commission the examination of a work published at Paris by the Abbé Houtin, priest of our diocese, under this title : *La Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France au XIX siècle* [*Biblical Criticism among French Catholics in the Nineteenth Century*]

In view of the conclusions contained in the report of the Commission :

Considering that this book has been printed once and has just been

¹ A few days later, on January 22, the Abbé Maignen wrote in *La Vérité Française* : "I will make one correction in my article of January 18. I said that the Abbé Houtin had been a Benedictine. I have been told that M. Houtin has never been either *profès* or novice in the order of St. Benedict. He solicited admission, but after some months' trial it was found that he had not the spirit of the order, which surprised no one." The word "surprised" was in the text. The author would have done better to write "will surprise." Many people were very surprised that I had not stayed at Solesmes.

² Echoing *La Vérité Française* of January 18, *L'Italia Reale* (Turin) referred to the *pernicioso libro dell' ex-benedittino Houtin*.

reprinted without the authorization of the bishop, which constitutes serious disobedience to the prescriptions of the Holy See ;

That it contains offensive criticism and rash judgments concerning the studies of Catholics and even the decisions of councils, popes, bishops, on the subject of the Old and the New Testament ;

That it is calculated to shock believers and to pervert their faith ;

We have declared and we declare by these presents :

That this book is dangerous and injurious ;

And we forbid the priests and the faithful of our diocese to read it.

(2) Having examined the Ordinance of his Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, which condemns the work of the Abbé Loisy, entitled *l'Evangile et l'Eglise*,

We in our turn condemn it for the same reasons, and in like manner we forbid the clergy and the faithful of our diocese to read it.

Given at Angers, February 6, 1903.

† JOSEPH, Bishop of Angers.

A few days later, I sent the following letter to my bishop :—

Paris, February 11, 1903.

MY LORD,

I deeply regret that my book, *La Question Biblique*, should have displeased your Grace more than its predecessors, since your Grace has so solemnly censored it.

I appreciate, more than I can express, that your Grace should have taken so long—nearly a whole year—to consider my case before bringing yourself to perform “your imperious duty.”

I deplore, I disown, and I condemn anything in my book which might be taken for “offensive criticism,” “rash judgment,” “calculated to shock believers and to pervert their faith.” To relate, not to censor nor to give lessons in theology, was my object. If I failed, it was unwittingly and not intentionally. As for conclusions which seem to result from an accurate and carefully documented account, they are beyond my control, and even contrary to my most cherished desires.

In order to prevent any misunderstanding, loyalty compels me to stress one point. The main trend of scholarly and critical discovery, which, in my purely historical narration, I did not feel called upon to expound or justify *ex professo*, seems to me as completely proved as the ideas of Copernicus, and I could no more abjure one than the other.

Deign to receive the homage of the profound respect with which I am, my lord,

the very humble and obliged servant of your Grace.

On the following Saturday, the *Paris Semaine Religieuse* published the following document :—

François Marie Benjamin Richard, by the grace of God and of the

Holy Apostolic See, Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church, with the title of Mary Santa Maria, *in via*, Archbishop of Paris.

In view of the Ordinance of his Grace, Monseigneur Bishop of Angers, concerning the work of the Abbé Houtin, priest of his diocese, entitled *La Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France au XIX^{ème} siècle* :

In view of the publication of this book at Paris without the *imprimatur* required by the law of the Church ;

In view of the serious reasons which have induced Monseigneur the Bishop of Angers to forbid the priests and the faithful of his diocese to read this work ;

We in our turn likewise forbid the clergy and faithful of the diocese of Paris to read it.

† FRANÇOIS, CARDINAL RICHARD, Archbishop of Paris.

By mandamus of his Eminence :

Maurice Clément, Ch. Hon. Secretary.

Paris, February 12.

The Catholic press, naturally, lost no opportunity of spreading abroad the news of my condemnation. An Italian newspaper, corresponding to *La Vérité Française—La Vera Roma*, of February 22—even announced that “several French bishops, among them the Bishop of Angers and the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris,” had recently condemned my book. As the object of such an announcement was obviously to stimulate the action of the congregation of the *Index*, I myself sent more accurate information to *La Vera Roma*. The management forgot to send me the issue in which their loyalty must doubtless have brought it to the knowledge of their readers.

Meanwhile, my letter to my bishop remained unanswered. The diocesan *Semaine Religieuse* announced that M. Loisy had written to Cardinal Richard concerning his condemnation, but made no reference to me. Evidently my manner of accepting my condemnation gave less satisfaction.

I soon had the opportunity of explaining myself to my bishop more fully. He had ordered me to obtain an appointment by April 1,¹ and the time for the settlement of my affairs was drawing near.

In the previous December, the Abbé de Meissas, chaplain

¹ See above, chap. xi, his letter of October 2, 1902.

in the Rollin College, had asked for me to become his assistant. The post he offered me was modest, since the salary was no more than six hundred francs. As my friend was both kind and persistent, he continued to make his requests, so that the matter dragged on until my condemnation robbed me of any chance of success. I then concluded that it was quite useless to look anywhere else. No bishop would receive me into his diocese for fear of seeming to disapprove of the ordinances of my lords of Angers and of Paris, and perhaps also for fear of receiving a heretic.

Heretic at that time I do not think I was. Brought up in the theological ideas of Latin medievalism, I had renounced them, but I did not on that account conclude that Catholicism was wrong, any more than the failure of certain scholars who thought they had discovered a substitute for religion had driven me to believe in the bankruptcy of scholarship. If the *Index* had condemned me then, I should probably have submitted to its verdict immediately. But I did not think that Rome would condemn me, because the Pope himself, by instituting a commission for the study of the Scriptures, had recognized the difficulties which criticism was raising.

I, in my invincible naïveté, had founded the greatest hopes on this Biblical Commission; I did not doubt its impartiality; but, while waiting for it to enlighten us, I did not see why I should not speak according to my own conviction. And if a child questioned me, for example, as to the universality of the Flood, the story of Jonas, or of St. René, I could not but reply: "These stories are not very well authenticated, and I, for my part, do not believe them." I was anxious to reply thus because it was true, and in order that my words should be believed when, for example, I asserted the existence of God. In Anjou it would not have been wise to speak thus, and for that reason I did not want to return there. Friends objected that my colleagues acted differently. "That does not concern me," I replied. "I act according to my own conscience, not according to that of other people. When I entered the Church it was to assume a priestly office, and not to practise a trade. At that time I believed in the old legends,

and I could promise to teach them. Alas ! since then I have seen everywhere and always the organization of pious lying.”¹

Hébert and Meissas, to whom I had communicated my experience, had revealed to me the secret thoughts of a historian whose conclusions interested me especially—Monseigneur Duchesne.² On the other hand, Meissas,³ Ermoni, Dabry, and a number of other priests had revealed to me the true convictions of such and such distinguished ecclesiastics. I knew that a certain vicar-general, a certain important priest of Paris, certain scholarly prelates, certain eminent religious, whose subtle arguments had contributed to form or to strengthen my belief, were merely clever actors. As my religion still depended partly on their authority and partly on that of those who resembled them, I did not feel any easier on that account. I was seeing more and more how far persistence in priestly functions depended on family considerations, and more still on that serious problem which Figaro expressed so well in these words : “One must dine.” I was agitated ; I needed silence, study, meditation, and retirement.

When the time came for me to settle my affairs, I wrote the following letter to my bishop :—

Paris, March 23, 1903.

MY LORD,—

I entreat your Grace to be so kind as to renew my *celebret*, which expires this month.

Your Grace wrote to me on October 2 that I must return to your diocese if, on April 1, I had not found an appointment in the Church. I have not found one. But I think that recent events may have modified your Grace's decision. To me they seem to have singularly strengthened the reasons for which I asked permission to remain away.

¹ Letter to Dom Chamard, August 25, 1901.

² Attaching particular importance to Duchesne's conclusions, I made a point of relating during his lifetime and during the lifetime of Hébert that it was he, Duchesne, who ruined Hébert's faith in Christianity, by pointing out to him the contradictions in the Gospels touching the resurrection of Jesus. Duchesne took care not to give the lie to my story, although he was invited to do so. Cf. *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, pp. 6-7, and *Un Prêtre Symboliste*.

³ M. de Meissas has himself summarized his observations of “faith among priests” in a note with this title, and which I have published in an appendix to my book, *La Crise du Clergé*.

Consequently, I beseech your Grace to be so kind as to consider the situation seriously, and I deem it my duty to describe it briefly, however painful such a description may be both to the heart of a bishop and to me.

When I promised obedience to my prelate, I regarded the Church as the mistress and guardian of all knowledge and all truth. I believed this until the day when the lessons in criticism and ecclesiastical sincerity which your Grace deigned to give me concerning the legend of St. René caused me to perceive that things were not precisely what I had believed them to be. Not knowing exactly what to make of it (I am still studying Biblical criticism), I have, nevertheless, learned enough to be sure that neither my teaching nor my preaching would please you.

No one, my lord, could be more submissive and devoted to authority, but only so long as it does not require me to say anything contrary to the truth. Having been brought up in the beliefs of another age, I have now lost them ; I cannot speak as if they were still mine.

In such conditions, to continue absent from a diocese in which I can be nothing but an occasion of trouble and scandal seems to me the only possible solution.

I most earnestly desire to please your Grace—I am most deeply grateful for the kindness of which you have given me so many proofs—but none the less I remain subject to a duty more imperious than that of gratitude and obedience : the duty of speaking as my conscience dictates.

For this reason I venture to ask you not merely to refrain from recalling me, but to grant me a duly authorized holiday, which will allow me, while working for religion, to try and earn a livelihood as best I may.

Deign to receive the homage of the profound respect with which I am, my lord,

the very humble and very obliged servant of your Grace.

Here is the reply :—

Angers, March 30, 1903.

Bishopric of Angers.

REVEREND SIR,—

My lord charges me to acknowledge your letter of the 23rd inst., which, you must understand, has wounded him deeply.

The attitude of mind and soul which it reveals prevents him from renewing your *celebret*, which expires at the end of this month.

Moreover, my lord could not permit a priest of his diocese to remain indefinitely in a foreign diocese, outside his jurisdiction, and not having been accepted by the bishop in whose diocese he resides, and from whom he ought to hold his ecclesiastical function.

Consent to receive, Reverend Sir, the assurance of my respectful sentiments.

L. THIBAUT, General Secretary.

I did not reply, not even to call his attention to the circumstance that since leaving Angers I had always lived with my father and mother. I could hardly be in surroundings more natural, nor in a diocese less "foreign."

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE "INDEX"

I Publish the Story of "My Difficulties With My Bishop"—Pastor Paul Sabatier—Americanism—Three of My Books Condemned at Rome.

April, 1903—June, 1904

My bishop's refusal to renew my authorization to say mass pained me sadly. As circumstances had centred my studies on various questions of scholarship rather than on the fundamental principles of Christianity, I was still orthodox. I believed in the whole body of Catholic dogma—not merely in the divinity of Jesus Christ, but in transubstantiation and in my priestly office. It was therefore a grief to me not to ascend the altar steps. Following the advice of theologians unjustly suspended, dismissed, or excommunicated, I prayed to God to remedy by special grace an evil which I could not prevent.

My treatment by my bishop upset my temporal affairs as much as my pious opinions. According to current prejudice, a priest deprived of the power of saying mass loses caste. The public believes him to have committed some grave offence. No family will engage him as professor or tutor for their children. It is almost impossible for him to earn a livelihood.

Determined to defend my honour, I decided to make my case known to the public,¹ in order to explain briefly how, when my bishop had been brought to make his decision, my duty restrained me from endeavouring to persuade him to alter it. My papers were rapidly put together; I confided the printing to an important firm which carries out its work without delay. On the evening of April 11, Saturday in

¹ See above, chap. xii, my letter to Monseigneur Rumeau of Sep. 15, 1902.

Holy Week, I received the first copies of my pamphlet.¹ The next day I sent it to Monseigneur Rumeau and M. Letourneau. They did not acknowledge it. I heard later that the former had immediately passed on the little work to M. Grellier, charging him to write a refutation supported by a critical study of all my writings. But this project was never carried out owing to the difficulty of contradicting assertions which are invariably supported by references and documents.

At M. Loisy's request, the Archbishop of Albi spoke on my behalf to Monseigneur Rumeau, whom he met at Orléans on May 8, at the Joan of Arc Festival. My bishop, who did not anticipate this, was rather annoyed by it, and tried to justify his conduct by alleging that I had "Protestant tendencies." The archbishop probably believed that he had won the day for me; soon afterwards he had an inquiry made as to whether my *celebret* had been renewed. This negotiation having come to nothing, M. Loisy employed another ecclesiastic—either, I assume, M. Monier of Saint-Sulpice, or some other big-wig of the same company—to use his influence with my bishop on my behalf. Monseigneur Rumeau declared that the only canonical solution was my return to his diocese, and that he was determined to reduce me to silence. "This ingenuous avowal," wrote M. Loisy, "I found highly edifying, though it did not lead very far."

Out of respect for my bishop, I confined the circulation of my memorandum to my near relatives; to my intimate friends, naturally very few; to certain cardinals and personages at Rome² whose office showed them to be people who ought to be kept informed as to what M. Loisy called "the intellectual régime of the Church." One of those who received my pamphlet must have spoken of it to a friend, since a person

¹ *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque*, 8vo, 62 pp. Printed by Lahure, Paris.

² The Cardinals Agliardi, Mathieu, Rampolla, Serafino Vannutelli, Vivès y Tuto; Monseigneur Lega, auditor of the holy congregation of the council, and since cardinal; Monseigneur Duchesne; Dom Laurent Janssens, the fathers Esser, Genocchi, and Lepidi. I also sent it to Father Tyrrell, who wrote me a letter on the subject, published (p. 87) in Miss Petre's collection of his letters (1920).

to whom I had not sent it, and of whose very existence I was ignorant, wrote me the following letter :—

Geneva, Rue du Mont de Sion 4, May 10, 1903.

It is with great interest, sir, and with sympathy with you in the difficulties which lie all around you, that I read and re-read the story, so calm and so lucid, of the growing distance which the course of your studies and of your published writings has put between you and episcopal authority.

We Protestants have, for more than a century, been seeing sincere and upright men leave the Church in order to remain true to their ideas.

In 1760, the church of Neuchâtel censored the minister Petitpierre. M. Charles Berthoud has related this chapter of ecclesiastical history (extending from 1872 till 1874) in his *Musée Neuchâtelois*.

In 1769, Henri Meister, minister of the Holy Gospel, was also censored by the church of Zurich; it is a story which I have summarised in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* of November 1 last.

In 1773, the Genevese Moulton, the friend of J. J. Rousseau, renounced the evangelical ministry for a similar reason.

And how many Protestants in the nineteenth century have taken the same course?

On their situation, both before and after their break with the Church, Strauss wrote penetrating and sincere pages, which my brother translated (*Essais d'histoire religieuse*, by D. F. Strauss, translated from the German by Charles Ritter, with an introduction by Ernest Renan; Paris: Lévy; 1872; pp. 354 *et seq.*).

In truth, to leave the Church is to give up exerting any influence over those who remain faithful to it. The door closes on him who departs, and his voice is heard no longer. It is a necessary and also a very painful result of his new situation.

In face of the fear of thus losing, not merely the result of one's studies, but even the hope of attaining to an ideal hitherto pursued—the reconciliation of a sacred tradition with an imperative truth—surely it is permissible to hesitate, and even to withdraw.

Whatever course you take, sir, I entreat you to be assured of my very sincere, distinguished, and devoted sentiments.

EUGÈNE RITTER.

If I started on a path of adventure, it was not because I lacked counsels of prudence. Possibly I walked straight on "stiffly and without guile," as Dom Fontenau said;¹ and I did not forget his words, but I wanted to arrive at a clear position. Neither "the fear of losing the result of my studies," nor "that of leaving the Church," nor the ambition

¹ See above, p. 134.

"to exercise an influence over those who remained faithful to it," could prevail against this desire. I had, moreover, not the slightest intention of entering on a controversy with my bishop, which would have been one between a pot of earthenware and a pot of iron.

Possibly my bishop's ideas were less pacific. At any rate, he was then trying vainly to get my books censored at Rome.

Two of the *Index* advisers, the Fathers Esser and Lepidi, had pronounced my *Question Biblique* courageous and opportune. To their colleagues, who advocated its proscription, they replied that it would seem absurd, since, while refraining from pronouncing any opinion on fundamental questions, I confined myself to the exposition of incontestable facts. Besides, Leo XIII was dying, and he was refusing to censor a book by M. Loisy which was, naturally, more strongly denounced than mine.

Monseigneur Rumeau set out for Rome as soon as he learned that Leo XIII's condition had become desperate. Whatever may have been the object of his journey, he was the first French bishop received by Pius X. After this audience, he went on to the cardinals who were members of the Biblical Criticism Commission, and of the congregation of the *Index*, to solicit my condemnation. He represented me as a little Luther who ought to be crushed immediately. A priest of Paris, a great friend of the Abbé Maignen, the Abbé Périés,¹ who had gone to see the conclave and who knew several cardinals, notably Satolli, member of the Biblical Criticism Commission, and Steinhuber, prefect of the *Index*, called on them immediately after him. Consequently, he received the story of my lord's grievances red-hot from them, and, on his return, took a delight in relating them.

At this juncture, the author of a *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, which had made a great stir, M. Paul Sabatier,²

¹ See my book, *l'Americanisme*, and, in *La Phalange* of April, 1909, an article by M. Edouard Schneider, "The Case of the Abbé Périés."

² M. P. Sabatier, born at Saint-Michel de Chabrillanoux (Ardèche) in 1858; he was Lutheran pastor at St. Nicholas, Strasbourg, and Calvinist pastor at Saint-Cierge-la-Serre (Ardèche). In 1919 he became professor of history at the Faculty of Protestant Theology at Strasbourg.

invited me to spend a few days with him. We had corresponded in the previous year about my *Question Biblique*, on which he had sent me his congratulations.

I acknowledged his compliments politely. He replied to me with warmth. A few days after he had sent me his second letter, he wrote to Marcel Hébert :—

It appears that Houtin's book on *La Question Biblique* has fallen like a thunderbolt. Several prelates have denounced it to the *Index*, but it appears that he has partisans there who are determined to defend it to the bitter end.

Do you know Houtin? Is he a priest? Do you think he is aware of the consternation his book has caused in Vatican circles, in spite of the efforts made to conceal it?¹

When M. Sabatier asked whether I were a priest, it was a way of obtaining other information. That which he gathered concerning me could not have been unfavourable, for the following year—that is, precisely, on August 12, 1903—he sent me these lines: "How are you? In my friendliness I should like to know all about you. But common sense tells me I am indiscreet." Five days later he wrote to me again :—

Chalençon (Ardèche),

August 17, 1909.

DEAR SIR,—

Permit me to address you in perfect friendliness, liberty, and simplicity, as I like to be addressed myself.

In the event of your wishing to rest for a few days (three, eight, or fifteen??) in the mountains, we should be very pleased to have you here.

We shall be here until September 15, in the Cevennes, at a height of seven hundred and fifty metres. We have unearthed an old ruin in which we are picnicing. A room is at your disposal. If you accept it you will be absolutely free. No formalities, no etiquette. You could work or wander in the mountains. We would only meet at meals (the local wine is very good, the water delicious, milk excellent; as for meat, we eat chicken mostly), and there we would talk freely and fearlessly about everything. I receive *Le Temps*, *l'Univers*, *l'Osservatore* from Rome, the *Giornale d'Italia*, and other periodicals, clerical and anti-clerical.

You might come in your cassock or in secular dress, as you wish.

¹ Letter from Grottemare, August 7, 1902. I found it when sorting M. Hébert's papers after his death.

Two years ago, in a neighbouring village, we had Father Semeria in his cassock saying mass, and the Abbé Brizio in a white coat.

It would be delightful. We should learn to know one another, and I could tell you a number of things about Rome and the Italian movement that one could not convey in letters. Further, I believe I am one of the few men in France who observe without passion or prejudice what is taking place outside the Church.

I know nothing about you and your position. You seem to me too intelligent to be swimming on gold. Let me tell you, therefore, that if you accept my invitation I will send you your return ticket. By leaving Paris in the evening you can be here to lunch at noon the next day.

You will forgive me—will you not—for writing to you thus, and you will regard my insistence as prompted by the earnest desire to know you, and perhaps to enable you to profit by my experience of men and things in the Church.

In my opinion, you are destined to exercise great influence in France.¹ It is a question of preserving your full and complete liberty.

One in your critical condition is spied upon by a crowd of people waiting to pounce upon their prey.

Good-bye.

Love me as I love you, and you will be as free with me as I shall be with you.

PAUL SABATIER.

All I hear about Pius X completely confirms my opinion that the *Index* and the Holy Office will work much more regularly under him than under Leo XIII.

Concerning my correspondent's views and social position, all I knew was that he had once been a Protestant pastor, and that he professed an ardent sympathy for liberal Catholicism, which was reciprocated by the adherents of the party.

I accepted the invitation, little dreaming of a truth, expressed in the following terms ten years later by the rector, Jules Payot, a former friend of M. Sabatier: "We should mistrust people who imitate St. Francis of Assisi without having first followed his example and given their possessions to the poor."²

But at that time I did not mistrust Protestants—on the contrary, I was favourably disposed towards them, knowing

¹ M. Paul Sabatier had written the same to Marcel Hébert on September 14, 1902: "It is you, dear friend, who from the point of view of philosophy will direct the new progressive movement." See *Un Prêtre Symboliste*, p. 159.

² Payot, *L'Apprentissage de l'Art d'Ecrire*, p. 106.

them only by their best works on religious history and literature. Naturally, I included among these M. Sabatier's *Life of St. Francis*, which I regarded as thoroughly sound, seeing that the Academy had awarded it a prize of twenty thousand francs.

On receiving my acceptance, M. Sabatier sent me my return ticket—two hundred francs. He added supplementary explanations: "At table or while walking, we exchange ideas with a freedom which may surprise you. Even my children speak frankly; and my wife, I am happy to say, is rarely of my opinion. Her heart and her intelligence are seldom separated. I have a Catholic heart and a rationalist intellect."¹

A few days later I arrived at M. Sabatier's. I found a gay and lively little man, who was slightly meridional. He was constantly smiling, but that too frequently recurring smile was often belied by an ironical gleam in his eyes—blue and flashing eyes, which would have been attractive had it not been for a brightness which was too hard and metallic.

His forty-five years had cast thin silver threads through his romantic hair, his thick and long moustache, and his pointed beard. Although he still wore the pastor's white tie—an old habit, he told me—his appearance suggested an artist once of the "Latin quarter," but now comfortable and settled down.²

My host laid himself out to be charming, and seemed to me to be very pleasant, though somewhat inscrutable.

He posed to me as a kind of Catholic Freethinker, more Catholic than Freethinker. He repeated in an affected manner: "When I was a Lutheran.....," and he appeared to regard Protestantism as dead.³ His detachment from his

¹ Letter of August 23, 1903.

² M. Sabatier, who is very proud of his head, has made it the frontispiece of his work, *Disestablishment in France* (London: Fisher Unwin; 1906). In Italy his portrait has been published by a number of illustrated papers—for instance, in the literary supplement of the *Diritti della Scuola*, October 22, 1904.

³ On the subject of Protestantism, M. Sabatier expressed opinions similar to those I found in a letter he wrote to M. Hébert on April 2, 1902: "One must avoid all relations with Protestants. I hope you understand me: I have the most respectful esteem for my fellow believers, but, in addition to the

sect impressed me as being all the more complete in that neither he nor his wife nor his two young children went to the temple¹ on Sunday. Nevertheless, at that time M. Sabatier was still a pastor—a Calvinist pastor, taking a holiday, but liable to be recalled to duty. He, however, contrived to conceal this from me, and I did not discover it until two years later. In his unctuous manner, which is also that of his books,² he was constantly referring to very intelligent bishops and priests, to reverend fathers, and to admirable nuns.

As I was given to understand, M. Sabatier had occasionally, as in my case, made their publication of certain books an excuse for entering into communication with them. In any case, he told me he was in correspondence with the Archbishops of Albi and Rouen (MMgrs. Mignot and Fuzet), the Bishop of Tarentaise (Mgr. Lacroix), the Abbés Dabry, Denis, Marcel Hébert, Loisy, Naudet; with several chaplains and former chaplains of Saint-Louis des Français, and with a number of Italian priests.³ The Abbés Pierre Batiffol and Bricout had not replied to the letters he had written them. He questioned me about these two unsociable theologians.

"What is M. Sabatier at?" I wondered, when he spoke

fact that there are sometimes malicious people among them as elsewhere, there are also none who understand the soul of a priest and are qualified to give him counsel. Protestantism is a grand and fine historical period; but I consider that it no longer has a special mission." See *Un Prêtre Symboliste*, p. 153.

¹ The name given to Protestant churches in France, at any rate to those of *l'Eglise Réformée*, which, before the separation of Church and State in 1905, was the established French Protestant Church, receiving a government grant.—TRANS.

² For example: "France fights religiously. Catholics, Protestants, Free-thinkers, we feel that our sorrows are renewed, prolonged, and consummated like those of the innocent victim of Calvary." Letter published in *Les Entretiens des Non-Combattants durant la Guerre* (by "l'Union pour la Vérité"), February, 1916, p. 6.

³ On July 16, 1906, M. Sabatier boasted to M. Hyacinthe Loyson that on the publication of his work on *The Separation of Church and State* he had received sympathetic letters from 2,300 functioning Catholic priests. He had just passed through Turin, and there, he said, forty-seven priests had called on him. See my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, p. 159, note. I have every reason to believe these figures grossly exaggerated, but they prove how desirous and proud M. Sabatier was to enter into relations with Roman priests. M. Loisy called him "the fly on the wheel." See *Autour d'un Prêtre Marie*, p. 278.

to me of his innumerable "Catholic friends." "Why does he seem so eager to correspond with so many priests?" I was then too innocent to find a solution of this problem, and, besides, more important thoughts occupied me. Instead of "wandering in the mountains," I had begun to read Renan's *Les Origines du Christianisme*, which I had found at my host's. Although this work was far from satisfying me, it gave me a bird's-eye view of the subject which I had not had hitherto.

While I, ingenuous and confiding, was accepting M. Sabatier's hospitality, he, without warning me, was involving my name and my person in religious controversies. He had invited me merely to see if I was utilizable. "In your critical condition," he had written to me,¹ "one is spied upon by a crowd of people waiting to pounce upon their prey." He explained to me, when I reached his house, that when thus warning me he had been thinking especially of Charbonnel and Bourrier.² I was far from imagining that the man who talked to me thus had already appropriated me.

On August 31 *Le Siècle* published an article entitled *Contre la Critique*, signed by a professor at the faculty of Protestant theology in Paris, M. Raoul Allier. It begins thus: "A friend at Rome, who is in a position to know what is going on at the Vatican, writes to me that, in all probability, the holy Congregation of the *Index* will, in October next, be again concerned with the works of the Abbé Loisy and the Abbé A. Houtin. Their intention, one imagines, will hardly be to praise these works and the conscientious and scholarly men who have written them. Meanwhile the Bishop of Angers, to whom the Abbé Houtin is subject, has recently cancelled the latter's authority to say mass. Such a prohibition is a serious and degrading penalty for a priest." The rest of the article was devoted to an exposition of *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque*.

¹ See above, p. 171.

² He had written in the same strain to M. Hébert on April 2, 1902: "Carefully avoid all contact with ex-priests, for, imbued with the pontifical spirit, their aim and object is to set up one sect against another and larger sect." See *Un Prêtre Symboliste*, p. 159.

The friend to whom M. Raoul Allier referred in his opening lines—this "friend at Rome in a position to know what was happening at the Vatican"—was none other than M. Sabatier, and until 1911 M. Allier was to serve as M. Sabatier's pen-holder in *Le Siècle* and to carry on his campaign against the papacy¹ in its pages. M. Sabatier had other helpers abroad. One of them, a Swiss living at Rome, correspondent of the great Milan newspaper, *Il Corriere della Sera*—M. François Carry—had already, on August 26, told Italian readers about my affairs.

As M. Sabatier had been careful not to tell me of these articles which he had provoked, on my return to Paris on September 9 I was surprised to find the press commenting on *Mes Difficultés*.² I thought it right to call M. Sabatier's attention to this, since he seemed to take such an interest in me. I did not expect that the treason or indiscretion came from that direction. It was not until later that I happened to discover it.

If M. Sabatier thus pushed me into the ocean of controversy, it was not to make me a Protestant³ or an unfrocked priest. His plan, which I did not comprehend for some years, was subtler than that. But I do not think it originated with him. However that may be, in those days the enemies of the Roman Church, and possibly of all religion, had undertaken to emasculate Catholicism, or, so to speak, to dissolve it in liberalism. Starting with the principle that everything evolves, they wanted to transform it into a mere society for ethical education, of which it would be easy to get rid when

¹ See my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, p. 140, note 3.

² The *Eclair* published an article by E. Ledrain (September 6). The *Figaro* (September 9), under the signature "André Nève," gave an interview, said to be with an "authorized priest," announcing that I had been unfrocked. This article was naturally reproduced in *La Chronique de la Bonne Presse* of the 17th under the title of "Hearsay—Biblical Criticism—The Unfrocking of the Abbé Houtin." In Anjou the *Siècle* article was reproduced in the *Indépendant*, that of the *Eclair* in *Le Petit Courrier* and *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* (September 7). Republican newspapers carried on a campaign against the bishop (*Petit Courrier*, September 9, 10, 12, October 25, November 8, 10, 12, 16; *Patriote de l'Ouest*, September 8, 11, 12, 29, October 14). *Le Chrétien Français* of September 24 reproduced the letter from a so-called priest published by *Le Patriote de l'Ouest* on the 12th.

³ See *ante*, p. 174, note 2.

the time came. It would be done by filling the Church—a thing which would not be difficult—with priests and bishops who had lost their faith. The latter would enlighten the faithful or cause them to be enlightened. Sceptics would thus constitute the majority, the immense majority of the Church. Then, of two hypotheses, either a sceptic would occupy the throne of St. Peter and victory would be won without any ado, or an intransigent pope would excommunicate Catholic sceptics, they would abandon him, and he would remain isolated. In the sixteenth century the papacy had lost half Europe. In the beginning of the twentieth century it was to suffer a much more serious defeat throughout the world—the defection of all its enlightened adherents.

Now, if this fine fairy-tale were ever to become fact, disillusioned priests must not leave the Church, but remain in it, cling to it, and carry on their propaganda in its midst. Accordingly, M. Sabatier, who had entered into communication with a number of more or less liberal or unbelieving priests, craftily and in all manner of ways tried to persuade them to remain in the ranks of the clergy and to appear perfectly regular.¹

From the moment that he considered me "destined to exercise great influence in France"—that is to say, to become one of the leaders of his so-called liberal movement against the papacy—he did not wish me to remain in the position I then occupied through the withdrawal of my *celebret*—viz., in the outer courts of the clergy. Consequently he persuaded his friend, the Bishop of Tarentaise—Mgr. Lacroix—to give me a canonical position. M. Sabatier wrote to me, on October 13, 1903, from the bishop's palace, where he was staying: "He [the bishop] is considering whether he can appoint you professor in his seminary." I replied to M. Sabatier that such an arrangement was impossible. "I can be silent," I said; "but if I am put into any professorial chair, my duty is to say what I think. My teaching would

¹ See my *Histoire du Modernisme*, ch. viii: "l'Utilisation du Modernisme Catholique." The letter written in 1905 which I quote on p. 118 is from M. Paul Sabatier. See *ib.*, pp. 419-20, note on "the anti-Catholic conspiracy."

create a scandal and cause serious annoyance to him who had permitted it. Moreover, in present circumstances, I should regard it as the most abominable of crimes to urge any man to enter the priesthood. If the Church would shed her medieval theology, return to the inspiration of the Gospel and her work for the progress of individuals and nations, one might conscientiously try to obtain new ministers for her. Until then my work must consist in trying to pull her out of her old ruts."

Did M. Sabatier communicate the actual text of my letter to the bishop? In any case, the latter renewed his proposal to receive me as one of his clergy, which would allow him to grant me a *celebret*, and afterwards he would put me in a position to work where I would. I refused, being on the eve of publishing a new book, which would have compromised him, if only by the mere fact that it was to appear without the *imprimatur* (a serious offence).

It was a history of the liberal movement which had gone on among the Catholics of France after 1890, and which had enchanted my clerical youth. As the protagonists of this venture extolled the methods by which the clergy of the United States had assured themselves an honourable and respected position in that country, their movement had been described as "Americanism." This was the title I gave my book. In a pontifical letter, dated January 22, 1899, Leo XIII had condemned these liberal tendencies. Most of the ecclesiastics concerned had submitted, with more or less insincerity or with mental reservations. I was too well placed not to see that a group—in which I might once have been or might still be included—merely resumed or continued, in a manner more pronounced, more profound, more radical, the same attempt to adapt the Church to modern society. I knew that I was describing not a pointless incident, but the first phase in a great struggle. It was clear to me that from the political and social points of view, as well as from that historical point of view which I had recently studied in my *Controverse de l'Apostolicité* and in my *Question Biblique*, the Church constituted an obstacle to progress, and that there was a conflict

between her and our contemporaries. It was also very clear to me that social progress would not allow the Church to bar its way. In order to avoid wounding the feelings of living people, and in order not to reveal artful tactics, I was careful to treat *l'Américanisme* as a question completely closed, and to refrain from insisting on analogies which all intelligent readers must have noticed. Although I was anxious not to develop my ideas too far, and to risk being considered a ridiculous prophet and a pretentious author who magnifies his subject unduly, I did not hesitate to say in my Introduction: "A great battle is being fought in France. It is by no means near its end, and perhaps the struggle which will most impassion humanity in the twentieth century will be a religious struggle."

The book appeared in December, 1903. It displeased friends and opponents. In my carefulness to explain why the papacy had condemned the movement, the former saw a justification of authority and an attempt to obtain forgiveness for my *Question Biblique*. The others were perfectly aware that my story would unsettle the faithful by arousing their apprehensions as to the seriousness of the conflict between the Church and the age. One of the principal adversaries of the movement, the history of which I had related, the Abbé Maignen, wrote thus: "The statement of facts and the summing-up of the controversy are, in certain respects, impartial.....Conceived in an evil mind, leading to detestable conclusions, this work constitutes, through the masses of documents it includes, a formidable indictment of Americanism and of Liberal Catholics. Weapons and material for present-day controversy, which hitherto were accessible to only a few, it now brings within the reach of all."¹

The review from which these lines are taken began by treating me as an unfrocked priest. The Abbé Maignen knew very well that I was nothing of the kind, for he had seen *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque*; but he also knew very well that I could not summon him before any tribunal for

¹ *La Vérité Française*, December 19, 1903.

slander without risking dismissal. A priest who sues another is by that very fact subject to such a penalty. I could, however, prosecute the lay editor of the periodical. Several friends advised me to do so. Before taking such a course I thought it advisable to inform Mgr. Rumeau.

Two weeks earlier I had ventured to trouble him again about the pamphlet containing our correspondence. The press continued to comment on it. If it was favourable to me on the whole, its remarks were generally inaccurate. Consequently, I felt compelled to put the pamphlet on sale in order that those who wished to pass judgment on my affair should not do so without evidence. It seemed to me right to inform my bishop of this decision.

December 6, 1903.

MY LORD,—

I regret to inform your Grace that I find myself constrained to put on sale the little memorandum which I had written for my family and my friends.

For several months numerous French and foreign newspapers have been concerned with my case without knowing anything about it. As it is a question of my honour, I cannot allow this random writing to continue; I must therefore give a free circulation to lawful explanations. Nevertheless, though I have the right to stand on the defensive wherever attack has been made, I shall not distribute my pamphlet, and I shall not advertise it in any way. From me alone will it be procured.

I venture to hope that the delay I have interposed before adopting this necessary course, as well as the reservations I am making, will be a new proof of the sentiments of profound respect and complete deference with which I remain, my Lord,

the very humble and very obliged servant of your Grace.

This letter received no reply. The attacks of the Abbé Maignen caused me to resume the correspondence.

Paris, December 20, 1903.

MY LORD,—

The newspaper *La Vérité Française*, in its yesterday's issue, publishes an article in which I am called "an unfrocked priest."

You alone can, immediately and without scandal, give this statement the lie. Accordingly, I entreat your Grace to be kind enough to write the necessary words; and, if your Grace refuses, I ask it of the priest who once saw his honour called in question in the court of the *officialité*.

In the event of my request not receiving a favourable reply, nothing would remain for me but to have recourse to the courts against a slanderous paper, and to give my defence the widest possible publicity.

Deign to accept the homage of the profound respect with which I am, my Lord,

the very humble and obedient servant of your Grace.¹

When six days had passed without my receiving any answer I felt I must ask for the intervention of the metropolitan, the Archbishop of Tours, Mgr. Renou.² He did not reply.

The day after I had written to him I learned, merely by chance, that my *Question Biblique* and *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque* had been censored by a decree of the *Index*, which at the same time censored five books by M. Loisy. Many newspapers which announced the prohibition of the latter had not mentioned mine.

The situation appeared to me to be the following: My *Question Biblique* consists of nothing but ascertained facts. They are beyond all recantation. I should lie if I denied them; and, far from desiring to do so, although their ascertainment caused me painful disillusion, I am glad to know them, because they are true. As for a few personal theories, which I have suggested in *Mes Difficultés*,³ ideas of my own as to the harmony between science and faith, not pretending to be infallible, I cannot feel sure that they are sound. If Rome declares this kind of evolution of dogma incompatible with her doctrines, then I must submit.

I made up my mind immediately never to disavow my books purely and simply. I would not act the part of denying them in public when in my inmost heart I did not disapprove of them. On the other hand, it seemed to me perfectly useless to prosecute the fanatic who had called me an unfrocked priest. It might happen that soon I should be one. I decided to await events, while continuing my work.

¹ This letter closed my relations with Mgr. Rumeau. He took my name off the list of his priests in the diocesan *Ordo* published for the year 1905. At the time that my letter reached him the *Ordo* of 1904 had gone to press.

² For this prelate see the first series of my *Evêques et Diocèses*.

³ *Mes Difficultés*, pp. 19-20. See *ante*, ch. x, pp. 125-6.

My condemnation came upon me while I was preparing the second volume of *La Question Biblique*. As this study could not fail to clarify my ideas, I resolved to go on with it. I also decided to publish my Life of *Le Dernier Gallican, Henri Bernier*, immediately and just as it was. It had been ready for several years, but I had hesitated to publish it for fear of still further incensing against me my bishop, who was far from being tolerant in matters of history. My object in sending the work to press was not to aggravate his ill-will still more, but to finish with a book which was perfectly ready for publication. It appeared in the following April. Two months later a new decree of the *Index* included *l'Américanisme* among the prohibited books.

The hierarchy persecuted M. Loisy until he submitted. He ended, to my great astonishment and regret, by complying in terms which I was only to hear later when, in 1908, he published them himself.¹ While ecclesiastical authorities endeavoured to obtain the adhesion of this scholar, they left me severely alone. Neither the congregation of the *Index*, nor the Archbishop of Paris, nor my bishop, notified me of my condemnation and asked for my submission. I did not consider myself called upon to inform them of my reflections, seeing that neither my bishop nor my metropolitan had replied to my recent letters.

As the *Index* is frequently referred to by those who are ignorant of its formulæ, I think it well to reproduce here in its entirety the text of the first decree which censored my modest efforts. *La Documentation Catholique* (1924 ; vol. xii, col. 1440) says that my works were condemned by the Holy Office. The following decree shows that it was the Congregation of the *Index* that condemned them :—

DECREE.

Friday, December 4, 1903.

The Holy Congregation of the most eminent and reverend Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church established and appointed by Our Very Holy Lord, the Pope Pius X, and the Holy Apostolic See, for the purpose of Cataloguing

¹ *Quelques lettres sur des questions actuelles et sur des événements récents* (Ceffonds ; 1908 ; in-12). To be obtained from the author.

books of depraved doctrine, for their proscription, expurgation, and permission in the universal Christian republic,

Assembled in the apostolic palace of the Vatican, on December 4, 1903,

Has condemned and condemns, has proscribed and proscribes, has commanded and commands to inscribe in the catalogue of prohibited books, the following works :—

Albert Houtin, *La Question Biblique chez les Catholiques de France au XIX^{me} Siècle*.

Albert Houtin, *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque*.

Alfred Loisy, *La Religion d' Israël*. Decree of the Holy Office, Wednesday, December 16, 1903.

Alfred Loisy, *L'Évangile et l'Eglise*. Decree of the Holy Office, Wednesday, December 16, 1903.

Alfred Loisy, *Études Évangéliques*. Decree of the Holy Office, December 16, 1903.

Alfred Loisy, *Autour d'un Petit Livre*. Decree of the Holy Office, Wednesday, December 16, 1903.

Alfred Loisy, *Le Quatrième Évangile*. Decree of the Holy Office, Wednesday, December 16, 1903.

Wherefore let no one, of whatever rank and condition, in whatever place and whatever language, venture in the future to publish, read, or preserve the aforesaid works, condemned and proscribed, under the penalties set forth in the Catalogue of prohibited books.

These things having been reported by me, the Secretary whose name is signed below, to our very holy Lord, the Pope, Pius X, his Holiness has approved the decree and has ordered it to be promulgated. By virtue of which, etc.

Given at Rome, December 23, 1903.

L. † S.

ANDRÉ, CARDINAL STEINHUBER, Prefect.

BROTHER THOMAS ESSER (of the Order of Friars Preachers), Secretary.

CHAPTER XV

A SECOND INVENTORY

The Spiritual Evolution of a Professor of History—The Principles of Historical Criticism—Reliance on Sources—How I Recovered my Intellectual Liberty—Faith and Science—My Attitude towards Catholicism and Protestantism—Christian Theism—Modernism.

January–June, 1904

By what evolutionary process did the obedient and credulous creature that I had been for thirty-five years, the little self-educated professor that I had been for seven years, come to resolve not to submit to the condemnation of his work by the Church, that great and majestic Catholic Church, which glories in numbering among its adherents so many scholars and so many historians, both past and present?

A psychologist, M. L. Dugas, maintains that "minds destined to become the most independent and the most emancipated are precisely those which begin by being the most docile." And he develops his idea in the following manner :—

This reaction against one's upbringing, this docility which turns into independence, appears natural, inevitable, and normal.....Even when emancipation comes, it comes late, and, as it were, unwillingly ; it is postponed as long as possible—sometimes it would seem longer than possible. Docility is persisted in because of an acquired obstinacy : once having given one's faith it is hard to withdraw it, even for the best of reasons. As long as one can keep up the illusion, as long as one can believe that docility is not intellectual blindness, one remains true to one's masters, even although one no longer has reason for being true, and, indeed, every reason for not being. One would rather doubt oneself than not believe in others.....In order to claim the right to think for oneself—that is, really to think—one must incur, if I dare say so, the merited disrespect of others, as well as the respect equally merited of one's own thought and of thought in general.¹

¹ L. Dugas, article entitled "Docilité et Indocilité," published in *L'Education*, March–June No., 1919, pp. 8–18.

In some such manner, I believe, did I recover my liberty. Neither my will power nor my love of truth had the Church contrived to stifle in me, as she had in so many others. Moreover, the bread-and-cheese question made no appeal to me. As Dom Fontenau used to say: "Mine was a spirit which went straight on its way."¹

Perhaps my story has not thrown sufficient light on the changes in my belief wrought by circumstances while I was pursuing this straight path. I must, therefore, add something to what I have already said, in order to make my ecclesiastical mentality and surroundings better understood.

Having been unexpectedly made professor of history, I took as my guide a little book which is now doubtless forgotten, superseded, and out of print, but of which I still think very highly, and which largely contributed to form my method of work. The title of the book was *Principes de la Critique Historique*. Its author was a Belgian father, Father Charles de Smedt, President of the Bollandist Society. It was this book that taught me to consult sources.

"Above all things, beware of sources," said Mgr. Dupanloup to a lady who was studying history—Lady Blennerhasset.² Far from mistrusting sources, I, for my part, loved them, lived with them, and gradually forsook the historians who neglect or alter them—romantic historians like Ozanam and Montalembert, ultramontane writers like Rohrbacher, Dom Guéranger, Mgr. Freppel, Cardinal Bourret, etc., in admiration for whom I had been brought up. At the very time (1896) when I was beginning to estimate these writers at their true worth, I read Cardinal Newman's *Essays on Miracles*. They made me doubt the truth of the great miracles of ancient ecclesiastical history,³ and henceforth my religion became more emotional than dogmatic.

Father de Smedt declares that he was induced to write his little book of *Principes* by "the sorrow and the indig-

¹ See *ante*, ch. x, p. 134.

² *Selections from the Correspondence of the First Lord Acton*, vol. i, p. 52.

³ See *ante*, ch. viii, p. 97 *et seq.*

nation" aroused in him by "the success of such works as *L'Histoire Générale de l'Eglise*, by the Abbé Darras, and *Les Erreurs et Mensonges Historiques*, by M. Ch. Barthélemy, the authors of which seemed to claim to make up by sound sense for their lack of serious research and historical honesty." "Therein lay," so he said, "a serious danger for Catholic erudition which must be guarded against at any cost.....To be silent through fear of what might be said against us by those who felt that our strictures applied to them or by their friends would have seemed to us cowardly."¹

Without in any way venturing to place myself on the same footing as the scholarly Father de Smedt, I may say, I think, that I shared his sorrow and his indignation. My essay on *L'Apostolicité des Eglises de France* is penetrated by these sentiments. But, unlike him, I applied his *Principes* to Biblical documents, which he never examined.

I have described the reception of my first works. In 1901, Dom Chamard attacked me very maliciously. "In my youthfulness," I replied to him, "I am often indignant and distressed to observe everywhere and always the organization of pious fraud; for any one who believes in objective truth and holiness it is heart-breaking to see the way in which the saying of sceptics is being verified: man makes a truth out of what he believes, and holiness out of what he loves."²

Thus, as early as 1901, my experience consisted in what I had ascertained and was ascertaining—viz., "the organization of pious fraud" everywhere and always, in the present as in the past, in the ancient history of the Church as in its contemporary history.

True, my formula was as yet incomplete: it ought to have included some reference to mystic illusion; but on that point

¹ *Op. cit.* (Paris edition, 1883), p. 285.

² Letter to Dom Chamard on a latter-day Gallican (*Revue d'Anjou*, July-August, 1901). "The saying of sceptics" to which I referred is Renan's. As I quoted it at second or third hand, according to orthodox writers, I was not sure of being exact, so I abstained from attributing it to any one author. Later I found the authentic text in the *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*, p. 423. Here it is: "Man makes holiness out of what he believes, as he makes beauty out of what he loves."

I had not yet arrived at any conclusion. Further, in 1901, I still admitted the divine institution of the Church. On this point there seemed to me neither fraud nor illusion. I distinguished between the Church, which I believed holy and infallible, and her ministers, whom I knew to be faulty and deceptive. I was persuaded that the Church and society would in the end come to an understanding. And I believed it to be my duty as a priest to work for that understanding.

When the Church first condemned my naïve lucubrations I had not said mass for nine months. The course taken by my bishop had been as efficacious as it was painful. As I had ceased to consider it incumbent upon me to auto-suggest myself, I had become able to face all the problems which historical criticism presented to me. It was strange how much clearer my ideas became during those nine months. And they continued to grow clearer still during the following months, while I was meditating on what the Church stood for and on the implications of submission to the decrees pronounced against me.

I felt capable of taking Christian dogma to pieces, bit by bit, and explaining its elaboration without the intervention of any miracle. In order to sift my ideas, pen in hand, I assailed the two fundamental dispensations of Christian theology: Revelation and the Church. I satisfied myself that the basic documents of Christianity—the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles—are not, as I had been taught in the seminary, authentic, straightforward, and veracious. I satisfied myself that neither God nor Jesus instituted the Church in the literal sense as taught by the Church of Rome. For reasons of a purely philosophic order, I still firmly believed in God, in free will, and in the immortality of the soul. I even believed in religion—it was only my faith in Church dogma that had been shattered.

As Bossuet says: "Faith is the habit of believing a thing on the authority of the person who communicates it to us."¹ The authority of my pious mother, the authority of

¹ *Logique*, bk. iii, ch. xxiii.

the priests who had taught me, the authority of the abridged texts of my seminary manuals, had constituted the foundation of my beliefs. Later I had believed on the authority of learned liberal priests whom I saw remaining in the Church : Duchesne, Loisy, Turmel, Batiffol. But, for more than ten years, I had submitted to verification too many old legends, too many Biblical and patristic texts, not to conclude that dogmas have their source in contradictions, interpolations, and even in forgeries. I had discovered too many sceptics or mere hirelings among educated priests,¹ and even in the episcopate,² to remain henceforth under any illusion as to whether intelligent people could remain in the Church. My superiors and my confrères had repeated to me too often that it is not well to tell the truth. I knew what to think of the faith of Duchesne and Lejay. I was not very certain about the faith of Loisy. I saw how the Church maintained her authority, and I knew how it had been built up.

From faith, from the habit of believing, I had passed to knowledge, which is, as Bossuet says,³ "the habit of believing a thing on principles which are clear and well ascertained." Bossuet, after having given these admirable definitions of faith and knowledge, adds that knowledge "shuts out all fear and leaves nothing to be desired in that which is its precise object." I experienced it immediately. I enjoyed, as he said, "a clearness full and perfect," "a perfect serenity." But it was in my mind alone that this tranquillity reigned. Emotionally I was shaken. I had suffered much ; I was bruised and broken.

¹ See *ante*, chap. xiii, p. 163.

² Among the foreign bishops, concerning whose convictions I had even then the most reliable information, were John Ireland, Archbishop of St. Paul, and John Spalding, Bishop of Peoria in the United States, prelates who were constantly held up in France as models to young laymen, in order to show them that it is possible to be at once a Catholic and a great citizen of the modern world. They were pure Rationalists. I have referred to them at length in *L'Americanisme*, but without being able to reveal the true inwardness of their thoughts, because I had heard it in confidence and because they were still alive. The words of an archbishop which I have reported on p. 114 of my *Histoire du Modernisme* are Ireland's. It is Spalding who is referred to in my *Crise du Clergé* (2nd ed., p. 270) as a "discouraged" prelate, who "embarked on the Roman vessel because it seemed to him the best equipped for the attainment of the complete ideal of humanity."

³ *Logique*, bk. iii, chap. xxiii.

As I have never dwelt on the emotional side of the crisis I had passed through, nor expressed my great sorrow in any book, I have often been represented as a pure intellectual, happy in being delivered from mythology. The truth is quite different. My emancipation was very painful. I may be classed among those of whom Edmond Scherer writes the following :—

Some of those who have most definitely cut themselves off from tradition have begun with the most naive, the most unquestioning, the firmest faith.....Their convictions were shaken in spite of themselves. Objections, far from being sought, were forced upon them. They yielded to evidence. When first they perceived the precipice opening before them their soul was seized by an immense and agonizing fear ; they threw themselves on their knees, they wrestled weeping, they tried every remedy. They resorted to every counsellor. Feeling the thoughts which had constituted their joy and their strength flee from them, realizing all that they were losing, and failing to see anything that could take its place, accustomed to regard dogma as the food of the spiritual and the only guarantee of the human life, it seemed as if they were to revolve eternally in a bottomless abyss. Twenty times they determined to doubt their very doubts ; they tried to close their eyes to a light they loathed, they endeavoured to make themselves believe, and always they found themselves confronted by that absolute domination to which the truth subjects all honest souls.....For sincerity is for them so grand and sacred a thing that they end by sacrificing to it even their faith. The conflict they wage is, in short, a conflict between ethics and dogma, between loyalty of character and loyalty to a flag.¹

While, after many years of intense study, my mind was neither Catholic nor Christian in the orthodox and traditional sense of these words, my emotions long continued impregnated with Catholicism and Christianity. I venerated the founders of Christianity, beginning naturally with Jesus and Paul. My manner of feeling was determined by Christian and Catholic tradition. But this emotional attitude was not in the least dogmatic.

Christianity appeared to me as one of those systems of belief in which the white race, starting from serious and inevitable errors, has formulated symbols of philosophic and moral truth. Sometimes—and it was generally so—I felt

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, March 15, 1863, pp. 409–10.

more sympathy for that branch of Christendom whose symbols suggest more especially unity, authority, order—that is to say, for the Catholic branch.¹ Sometimes Protestant formulæ, freer, more compatible with sincerity, made a stronger appeal to me. But all this was purely emotional. My mind had rejected Christian mythology. On that account I was not tempted to rally to liberal Protestantism. My relations with its representatives did not attract me in that direction. Of M. Paul Sabatier I need not say anything more. But my observations in this quarter had been confirmed by those made in another section of the French Reformed Church. I often talked to a former professor of the Paris Faculty of Protestant Theology, M. Louis Massebiaw.² He told me that in the Protestant Church the religious crisis had advanced much more rapidly than in the Catholic, but that none the less miserable ecclesiastical disputes still played a great part. Why should I take refuge in such a circle? The rare elements that attracted me (personalities like those of Albert and Jean Réville and Eugène Ménégoz) seemed too isolated and too little esteemed by their co-religionaries to be capable of carrying out the religious evolution which appeared to me necessary.

My feeling for Judaism was ardent and naïve. But I had enough common sense not to embrace that religion. Its tradition is more racial than religious. On the other hand, it assumes an attitude unjust and spiteful towards the grand features of Christianity, which, in its turn, is often unjust and spiteful towards Judaism.

Had any one wished to label me, it would have been either

¹ For these attitudes of the soul see H. Delacroix, *La Religion et la Foi*, pp. 82-3. "Where is the truly religious man who completely repudiates that traditional teaching under the influence of which he first realized the ideal; where is he who does not seek for conciliations, frequently impossible, between his former faith and that to which he has attained by the progress of his thought?" (Renan, *L'Antéchrist*, p. 88).

² I met his daughter, Mme. Luc Compain, widow, at M. Paul Sabatier's in September, 1903. On my return to Paris she introduced me to her father. I visited him often, for I found his conversation most helpful to me in my then state of mind. He died on September 22, 1904. [The Translator may add that Mme. Compain is a well-known writer, the author of novels which deal with social questions, one of which is entitled *La Tragédie de Geneviève*.]

as a "Christian theist" or as a "theist with Catholic tendencies." The book of the ex-pastor Félix Pécaut entitled *De l'Avenir du Théisme chrétien, considéré comme religion*,¹ had won all my admiration. Any who wish to know in some detail what were then, and what were to continue practically for ten years to be, my faith and my hope, will find them in that book. My religion of those days is there set forth in a somewhat Huguenot style. It was a spiritual religion of the heart, at once independent of, and yet in the long run not incompatible with, any religion—an emotional Christianity rising above all dogmatic Christian Churches, venerating Christ as a master, though no longer worshipping him as a God. In the United States, in England, and in other countries, this religion exists in organized bodies. It is called "Unitarianism." As it is not organized in France, I could not formally embrace it.

Félix Pécaut lived and died in Liberal Protestantism. Could I not, like him, remain, for a while at least, in the liberal party of the religion into which I was born? It seemed to me that I could. Moreover, I hoped that Catholicism itself might give a new lease of life to the old Unitarianism, which was somewhat anæmic and fossilized. I was convinced that neither individuals nor nations could live without a religion; that the time for a new religion was at hand; that one can no more form a universal religion artificially than one can form a universal language artificially; that, as nothing is lost, so nothing is created, that everything is transformed, that the new religion would presumably be the transformation of the greatest and strongest of existing religions—viz., of Catholicism. My opinions at that time resembled those expressed by Renan in a letter which I had not then seen, but which later made an appeal that attracted me powerfully for a long while:—

¹ *De l'Avenir du Théisme chrétien, considéré comme religion* (Cherbuliez, Paris, 1864). Before I had discovered this book Père Hyacinthe had written to me: "You will be counted among the few who seek to save the traditional Church by serious and honest research, and if its salvation should be impossible you will have helped to found a better Church, one which might perhaps be called 'The Church of Christian Theism'" (Letter, April 16, 1903).

The Catholic Church is so great an institution, its present situation is so extraordinary and so tragic, that our century may perhaps see one of those crises in which the logic of the schoolmen will be found wanting. I continue to believe that our ancient Mother is still fruitful, and that, in spite of appearances, there will spring from her some form of religion in which the human conscience will find repose. Two things are certain: Catholicism cannot perish; Catholicism cannot remain as it now is. It is true that we cannot see how it can change. Hours in which every issue seems barred are the great hours for Providence.¹

One very practical question ought to have occurred to me. By refusing to denounce my books that had been condemned by the *Index*, I placed myself on the border line of priesthood, and I risked the danger of being expelled and being forced to break publicly with the Church, as I had privately broken with its dogmatic teaching. What would then become of me? How should I employ myself? How should I earn my daily bread?

I confess that I took no heed for the future. Faithful to the counsel of my old masters—Pascal, Bossuet, Malebranche²—I strove to think aright; I sought truth for itself and before everything, whatever might be “the theoretical or practical consequences.”³ “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” For the moment I consoled myself not for my rupture with symbolical and mystical religion, to which I was still attached, but for my rupture with the ecclesiastical hierarchy, with the Roman institution, which I had loved so much, which I had laughed at now and again, but without ever ceasing to love it because of its great mysterious unity and power for good. I wanted to study what form of religion I could express my emotions in and suggest to my co-religionists and compatriots who were passing through the same crisis. When one has failed in ordering one’s own life, one

¹ Letter of April 20, 1884, to a priest who had not left the Church. Its recipient showed it to me in 1904, and I published it in 1905 in my articles on “La Crise du Clergé,” which appeared in *Le Siècle*.

² Every one knows their oft-quoted sayings: “Our dignity lies in our thoughts.....Let us strive to think aright; that is the principle of ethics” (Pascal). “It is better to give up everything rather than to give up reason” (Malebranche). As for Bossuet, see *ante*, pp. 186–7.

³ The words of Louis Couturat.

had better refrain from advising others; retirement and silence are best. Such an idea never occurred to me. Instead of withdrawing wisely into private life and endeavouring to earn my daily bread, I wanted to be an apostle. I thought this my duty. And the performance of this duty did not appear to me impossible.

There seemed at that time to be an immense aspiration towards a more rational and a more sincere religion. It revealed itself alike among laymen and ecclesiastics, among women and men, abroad as well as in France, in all religions as well as in the Roman Church. Further, in all countries and in all confessions, ecclesiastics were apparently resolved to fight to the death for this progress. Could I not—ought I not—to help them in this attempt at a religious evolution or revolution?

True, the difficulties of the undertaking, especially the power of Rome—which, above all things, had to be overcome—did not escape me. But I had confidence in the justice of my cause, in the opportuneness of circumstances, in the value of my collaborators, especially of certain Catholic priests, whom I in my simplicity considered remarkable for their strong faith, their true holiness, and their great talents. I never dreamed that many of them were atheists or sceptics. Was it not to outrage the most ordinary common sense to believe that atheists and sceptics would want to reform a religion, especially a religion essentially theistic and spiritual? Neither did I ever suspect that the enemies of Catholicism, of Christianity, and even of all religion—that is to say, Protestants, Jews, Freethinkers—might wish to take advantage of such conjunctures, some to destroy a rival Church, others to abolish all religious hopes and beliefs.

Thus it was with terrible illusions that I embarked on a formidable enterprise: that of purifying religion and delivering the human mind from ancient errors, which, in all parts of the world, still wield immense power, both political and social.

CHAPTER XVI

SECRETARY TO A BISHOP

The Bishops of Tarentaise, Laval, and Dijon—On the Staff of *Le Siècle*.

June, 1904–February, 1905

THREE days after my book, *l'Américanisme*, had been put on the *Index* I received the following letter :—

Palace of the Bishop of Tarentaise.

Moûtiers, June 5, 1904.

DEAR MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ,—

Would you do me a service? Would you come to me at Pougues for the month of July and help me to put the final touches to a Life of Mgr. Landriot? The work is already well advanced, but my eyes are so weak that I can hardly complete it unaided. An experienced secretary like you would be extremely useful.

Moreover, I have in my possession some very curious papers, which perhaps might serve as material for a work other than the life of Mgr. Landriot.

Awaiting your reply, I assure you once again, dear Monsieur l'Abbé, of my religious devotion in our Lord.

† L. L.

Bishop of T.

In the previous year the writer of this letter, Mgr. Lucien Lacroix,¹ had proposed to receive me into his diocese,² and, further, he had twice³ offered my parents the care of a châtelet he owned at Pougues, which would have given them a home in a pleasant country district. So much kindness did not allow of my refusing the prelate's request.

He received me with great cordiality. Though inviting me to come beneath his roof, the bishop had not forgotten to be cautious. While with him I was to be called "The Abbé Henri Albert." With this name I signed the letters

¹ Born in 1855, consecrated bishop on June 24, 1901. He resigned his see of Tarentaise on October 17, 1907; was nominated titular bishop of Vallitana on January 6, 1922; died on January 27 following.

² See *ante*, chap. xiv, p. 176.

³ Letters of October 18 and December 12, 1903.

that I wrote to him afterwards. In memory of Cardinal de Richelieu, his ideal, he usually signed the letters he wrote to me "Duplessis."

While I was with him a storm-cloud burst in the Church of France. Possessed by a holy reforming zeal, Pius X, in the second year of his pontificate, took it into his head to require the resignation of the Bishops of Laval and Dijon, concerning whom unedifying stories were being circulated. The two prelates had no wish to resign, and the Government, to which they were devoted, determined to support them. The conflict waxed very bitter, and it became evident that it might have an important result—the denunciation of the Concordat.

Politicians of the left and right, each in the hope of advancing their own cause, pounced eagerly on the Laval and Dijon incidents. For a long while the separation of Church and State had been a plank in the programme of the advocates of the secularization of society, but they did not know how to bring it about. The Government feared it, and it failed to obtain a majority in Parliament. On the other hand, many Catholics preferred to launch out into the unknown rather than submit to bishops whom the directors of public worship did not scruple to nominate. Monarchists, who cared nothing for Catholicism, hoped that a religious agitation would bring about a reaction favourable to their views. Consequently, the extreme parties resolved to enter on a conflict at the expense of the nominated bishops. As these two personages were the occasion of a great reform, and now that I have referred to them, it will be not unfitting to tell their story.

Very susceptible to beauty, the Bishop of Laval, Mgr. Geay,¹ had been conquered by the charms of a young Carmelite nun in the capital of his see, Mère Thérèse-Marie-Cécile du Sauveur.² He made her his confidant, his directress, his

¹ Born in 1845; consecrated Bishop of Laval on September 6, 1896; resigned August 30, 1904.

² Though it is not at this point indicated in the text, we infer from subsequent references to this nun that she was prioress of her convent.—TRANS.

spiritual mother ;¹ he called himself her "baby." Then, so it is said, his emotions took a virile turn.

Denounced at Rome as having seduced a nun, he came out badly from an inquiry conducted by his metropolitan, the Archbishop of Tours, Mgr. Renou. The accused demanded another inquiry, and succeeded in getting the Archbishop of Avignon, Mgr. Sueur, who had excellent reasons for being indulgent to love affairs, appointed to conduct it. Mgr. Sueur declared the accused to be innocent. Leo XIII left Mgr. Geay in his see, and inflicted no disciplinary penalty on him. As the relations between the prioress and the bishop were likely to be difficult, the Pope placed the Carmelite convent of Laval under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Tours, who became its director superior, and who appointed as chaplain and temporal director one of the nun's friends, the Abbé Dissard.

These incidents had not occurred without some account of them having reached the public. The bishop's political adversaries did not fail to make mischief. When Leo XIII died they asked the new Pope to insist on his resignation.

If tenderness and kindness characterized Mgr. Geay, ambition was the chief feature of Mgr. Le Nordez, his colleague at Dijon. He was, moreover, an unsociable creature, who was soon disliked by every one with whom he came in contact. Of Norman birth, he arrived in Paris at the age of thirty-one, nominally to complete his studies at the Carmelite school, in reality to prepare for himself a great future. In 1877 he succeeded in obtaining the appointment of chaplain at Sainte-Geneviève, and when chaplains were suppressed he remained in the capital as a free-lance preacher. He chose as his audience the most remunerative portion of our Lord's flock—society women. And he was well suited to attract them : bright eyed, fresh coloured, bull necked, broad shouldered, with an imperious glance, a determined gait, and an artist's head of hair. When listening to his brilliant and interesting talk one forgot to notice a sinister

¹ For spiritual maternity see *Une Grande Mystique*.

expression of the mouth and a look of hardness. He was the dominating male. His priestly habit gave the impression that he won his victories for God. He was called "the apostle of the gentle."

In order to secure a permanent flock and an assured income, he founded, in 1882, a lecture society—"The Society of Sainte-Geneviève"—especially for ladies, with a bi-weekly publication, *La Revue Fénelon*. Several liberal young priests consented to become his collaborators—the Abbés Lucien Lacroix, Arthur Mugnier, Dumont, and the Fathers Chauvet and Godet, of the Oratory. The Abbé Lacroix soon resigned—the general was jealous of his lieutenant.

As this undertaking did not suffice for the energy and the needs of Le Nordez, he founded, about 1893, a popular society of Jeanne d'Arc, which he soon promoted to be a national league. In the towns and villages he visited he inaugurated "A Committee of Ladies and Young Girls of Jeanne d'Arc," with the object of raising money. The vanity of the members was appealed to by a craftily arranged series of officers—president, vice-president, secretary, co-secretary, treasurer, and an advisory sub-committee; the rank and file were "the companions of Jeanne d'Arc."

At that time the Maid was becoming a kind of new religion, by means of which the crafty were claiming to reconstitute the unity of France. Another sly dog, a native of Auvergne, Jean Pierre Pagis, Bishop of Verdun, also with the object of securing an income, set up a national monument at Vaucouleurs in honour of the deliverer of France. The undertaking proved difficult. Pagis needed an assistant. On January 6, 1895, he made Le Nordez director, and appointed him his vicar-general. Soon he had him nominated his suffragan, with the title of Bishop of Arca, "Arcensis Episcopus." This word-play was considered charming. Mgr. Le Nordez wrote of it thus:—

Arca is in Armenia, not far from Melitene (Malatia) and from Ararat, on which the ark rested after the Flood. Thither, doubtless, the dove, sent by Noah, brought the olive branch. In this we may see a favourable and encouraging augury for the future

ministry of the prelate, who some years ago, in his panegyric on Jeanne d'Arc at Orléans, represented her as the peacemaker of our time, the sweet dove bringing peace to the world in these latter days.¹

While to women Le Nordez talked this twaddle, to free-thinkers he posed as emancipated. He said that he had entered the episcopate as a servant of humanity; he called Lourdes "Catholicism gone to rot." Was he a freethinker? That is not my opinion. He believed in God, it would seem, and perhaps even in the divinity of Jesus Christ; but he expected his religion to be as profitable as any other calling. He was a Norman peasant, with an extraordinary faculty for shrewd dealing, wire-pulling, and intrigue.

In order to get himself accredited suffragan bishop at Rome, he had worked miracles of diplomacy. In the same way, and with equal talent, he approached the Ministry of Religions with the object of obtaining a bishopric in France. That of Dijon was assigned to him. A brother-in-law of the President of the Republic, M. Cunisset-Carnot, lived in the diocese. Mgr. Le Nordez imagined that with his patronage, which he would have no difficulty in obtaining, he would inevitably become Archbishop of Paris. While waiting to be cardinal in the metropolis, it occurred to him to copy, as far as they were known, the proceedings, the tone of voice, and the manners of Bossuet. Like him, he thundered against liberalism in dogma,² hoping that in return for this attack upon the liberals Rome would overlook his political servility. But his old habits persisted. Bossuet, like Jeanne d'Arc, Fénelon, and St. Geneviève, was to be a means of raising money. He resolved to erect a great monument to him at Dijon, and to derive from it no small profit for his trouble.

Nevertheless, at Dijon, as in every other place that had known him, his intolerable character had its effect. A party was formed against him. It carried its grievances to Rome,

¹ *Chronique de Jeanne d'Arc*, July 1; *Semaine Religieuse de Verdun*, July 11, 1895.

² He exploited orthodoxy to such a point as to accuse the Sulpicians, who directed his seminary and of whom he wished to get rid, of being partisans of M. Loisy.

accusing him of being a freemason, of having ordained priest his own son, and of having misapplied the funds intended for Bossuet's statue.

With regard to the last accusation, the part played by the bishop was not so free from suspicion as might have been wished; the two first accusations were absurd. The poor abbé¹ of whom he was said to be the father was merely his compatriot. The strongest proof of his being a freemason was a photograph, faked by a journalist of *La Libre Parole*.² In a photograph really taken in the Rue Cadet, the bishop's head had been substituted for that of some unknown person, or of some real freemason, to give the impression that he was coming away from the Grand-Orient. The most idiotic stories are easily believed in ecclesiastical circles, where credulity is intensively cultivated.

Under penalty of the most serious canonical sentence, Pius X summoned the two bishops of Laval and Dijon to appear at Rome at the end of July, 1904, although the French Government arrogated to itself the right of refusing them permission to go. These papal measures were said to be but a beginning, to be followed by the deposition of four or five other bishops. The Bishop of Tarentaise was among those who were suspected.

These happenings violently agitated Mgr. Lacroix. Even if he were not directly threatened, it seemed to him that his future would be ruined should the Concordat be broken; he would never obtain preferment—a lot which appeared to him as bad as imprisonment for life. His journalist temperament drove him into the controversial mêlée. He wrote two articles and sent them to *Le Siècle*, on which his friend, Cornély, was leader-writer, and of which M. de Lanessan, who had been

¹ From 1904-5 he was priest of Saint Apollinaire, near Dijon. His mother, a laundress of Valogne, was certainly not one of those "gentle" women in whose society Le Nordez delighted. When Mgr. Le Nordez left his See, the priest tried to remain in his parish, in spite of vicars-general. He was expelled. He left the priesthood and became an anti-clerical lecturer. Being unable to make a living except by the altar, he returned to the Church, and pious periodicals edified their simple-minded readers with the story of his conversion. See *l'Univers*, June 2, 1909.

² M. de Boisandré.

Minister of Marine in the Waldeck-Rousseau government, was political editor.¹ In my capacity of bishop's secretary, I collaborated in these articles. It was even agreed that, if need arose, I should assume entire responsibility for them. From the moment that I became responsible, seeing that I felt much less sympathy with the two accused bishops than did Mgr. Lacroix, I employed certain expressions with regard to them that the bishop himself would never have used. At that time, however, my information concerning them was very incomplete. I did not then know all that I learned later—many spicy incidents, which it would be inappropriate to relate here, since my subject is neither the biographies of these two successors of the Apostles nor the history of the end of the Concordat.

Mgr. Lacroix, doubtless, found me not unskilful in the assistance I was able to render him. He advised me to earn my living by journalism. *Le Siècle* also intimated that my contributions would be accepted. In the following October I became a regular contributor. For a salary of one hundred francs a month I was to write three or four articles. Not wishing to deal with actualities which were ill-defined and comparatively unknown, and lacking facts on which to comment, I resolved to write essays which would give accurate information to my readers on ecclesiastical personalities and current topics of the day. I immediately set to work on a series of articles entitled "La Crise du Clergé," which I published between November, 1904, and August, 1905. Later, between 1905 and 1909, I published another series, entitled "Evêques et Diocèses." These articles appeared later in volume form.

The crisis among the clergy! Of this I was no mere spectator, but a victim. In describing it, I had but to tell what I had myself experienced and what I had seen around me. I lived my whole life over again—my childhood, my youth, my life in the seminary, at the noviciate, as professor in the Low Seminary. I saw what had become of my comrades, my colleagues—monks whom I had known to be

¹ The two articles, signed "Vidimus," appeared in *Le Siècle* on July 18 and 22.

firm, and some of them ardent, believers. These articles are the record of my own experience. There is not a single line in them which is not founded on something that actually happened, and which I could not amplify by some fact or proper name.

The articles were signed "Xenos," a Greek word signifying "foreigner." For did I not now regard myself as a "foreigner," or "a stranger," among the clergy? Had I not been treated as such by my bishop and my metropolitan, who had come to ignore me completely?¹

In the articles entitled "Evêques et Diocèses," with the permission and even the encouragement of Mgr. Lacroix, I had used certain information which he had given me about his colleagues. They appeared at first signed by various pseudonyms (Vidimus, Vettius, Paul Chèze, Parizet, etc.), which, like that of Xenos, were open secrets. I spoke of them freely, and never attempted to conceal my identity by disguising my style. Moreover, the hunters of heretics were too set upon discovering the writer of the articles not to employ their utmost sagacity. Their attacks did not involve me in any quarrel with my friends, not even with the Bishop of Tarentaise.

The confidences of this prelate concerning the pontifical court, the bishops of France,² the rivalry between the secular and regular clergy, were not calculated to rekindle my affection for the Church, nor to strengthen my hope in its reformation. According to what he told me, it had ceased to represent anything but a syndicate of private interests.³ As for the prelate who was the last to reveal these mysteries to me, he seemed to be not without greatness. Instead of making sure of his career by appearing orthodox, as did so many of his completely sceptical colleagues, and saying, "After us the deluge," he preferred to centre his ambition on a perilous

¹ See *ante*, chap. xiv, pp. 179 and 181.

² Stories about women: MMgrs. Geay, Sueur, B. and H. Stories of immorality: Mgr. R. Money matters: MMgr. Le Nordez, Pagis, B. and S. Opinions: Mgr. Fuzet, Archbishop of Rouen.

³ Towards the end of 1900, Mgr. Duchesne called the majority of the French episcopacy "a gang of rogues." See *Un Prêtre Symboliste*, p. 121.

liberalism, an attempt to adapt to modern times the ancient religious institution of which he was one of the dignitaries, and which he regarded as a great moral institution. The difficulties of this process seemed to me much greater than he realized or professed to realize. At bottom we were desiring to work, and we were working, for the same cause—a religious change. Consequently, I determined to serve him according to my modest means. Perhaps in many circumstances I was too ready to follow his advice, which he gave readily, and as if it were a command.

Before hearing of my further relations with the Bishop of Tarentaise, my readers may not be averse to knowing the dénouement of the adventures of Mgr. Geay, Mgr. Le Nordez, and even of Mère Thérèse-Marie-Cécile du Sauveur.

The two bishops could not escape from the obligation of going to Rome. They were confronted by the following dilemma: either they must send in their resignation, and the Holy See would acknowledge that they had retired of their own free will, and would grant them an annual pension of 8,000 francs each, or they would refuse to resign, and then they would be tried by the Inquisition, and would have to submit to all the consequences of such a proceeding. They chose the first alternative, but they complained bitterly.

As, apparently, Mgr. Geay did not resort to anything more than the recriminations permitted to human weakness, the Holy See never ceased to pay him his pension punctually, and Pius X even granted him, in 1906, the title of Bishop of Samos. He died at Hyères on November 14, 1919. As for Mgr. Le Nordez, who had complained much more loudly, the Vatican, as a means of punishing him and reducing him to silence, suppressed his pension for several years, and only granted him a new episcopal title in 1922, three weeks before his death.

More fortunate than the two bishops, the prioress will doubtless occupy an edifying position in the history of Catholic piety. As in the seventeenth century a Carmelite nun of Beaune was the foundress of the worship of the Infant Jesus, the prioress of the Laval Carmelite convent became,

through a widely-circulated pamphlet,¹ the foundress of the worship of the Infant Mary, or, as her most distinguished adherents would say, of the *Santissima Bambina*. The object of this worship is an enormous doll, swathed in white lace, muffled in a sumptuous bib and wearing a richly ornamented cap, studded with imitation gems. The contemplation of this idol, it appears, is most effectual in promoting the coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ into the heart. A sanctuary of "the infant Virgin Mary" was built by Leo XIII in the Laval Carmelite convent in 1897 (the very year when the beautiful nun made her conquest of the bishop).

The case of this holy woman interested me greatly, not because she instituted a new adoration, which, to use a pious phrase, "now radiates throughout the whole universe," but because it is a splendid illustration of one of the chief features of mystical psychology. Although mystics are for ever repeating that God alone satisfies them, they always need a friend, generally a friend of the opposite sex. After having had a great affection for the prioress under whom she served her noviciate, la Mère Cécile du Sauveur loved Mgr. Geay, then the chaplain of the convent, later Mgr. Dissard, and finally Mgr. Renou. When Dissard died, she retired to a villa near Tours, and the venerable Archbishop paid her the daily visits of which she stood in need.

¹ *Marie Enfant ou la Santissima Bambina* ; 16mo, 240 pp. Prefaced by a letter from Mgr. Renou.

CHAPTER XVII

MY JOURNEY TO ROME

(March-May, 1905)

THE newspaper to which I contributed, *Le Siècle*, had known days of glory and prosperity, but when I became connected with it those days were no more. According to its principal contributor, Cornély, it was now "a confidential paper"—that is, a paper almost without subscribers. Nevertheless, it had not entirely lost its importance, since it remained the organ of the radical party. That party, whose principal object had always been to oppose clericalism, resolved to take advantage of Pius X's attitude in the affairs of the Bishops of Laval and Dijon to bring about the separation of Church and State.

Le Siècle made a very serious study of the measures to be taken.¹ And the editors decided to send me to Rome to discover the opinions of the Roman Curia. They granted me during my absence an additional salary of fifty francs a month and a railway pass for France. Contributions to the *Giornale d'Italia* were to pay for my return ticket in Italy.

I left Paris on March 7, and visited Père Hyacinthe Loyson, who was taking a holiday at Montpellier, and Mgr. Lacroix, who was at Mentone with the same object. I reached Rome on the seventeenth, after having spent a few days at Florence.

My friends had provided me with introductions to certain important ecclesiastics and laymen. I may mention among

¹ See the following: *Une Campagne du Siècle, La Séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat*, by Henri Brisson, J. L. de Lanessan, Raoul Allier, etc. (12mo, xxiii+564 pp.); Raoul Allier, *La Séparation au Sénat* (12mo, 284 pp.); Henri Charriau (editorial secretary to *Le Siècle*), *Après la Séparation, Enquête sur l'Avenir des Eglises* (12mo, 320 pp.).

the former Mgr. Guthlin, ecclesiastical advisor and consultant on canon law to our embassy to the Holy See; Mgr. Duchesne, Director of the French School; Père Genocchi, Proctor of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Issoudon; Père de Cara, of the Company of Jesus, contributor to the *Civiltà Cattolica*; a Barnabite, Père Alessandro Ghinoni. Among the laymen were the President of the Senate, Signor Tancredi Canonico, Prince Baldassare Odescalchi, Marquis Francesco Nobili Vitelleschi, a senator, and author of various essays on historical subjects and religious philosophy; the Baroness Augusta d'Eichthal, a friend of Döllinger and Kraus, who occasionally entertained cardinals. All these people received me kindly, and asked for nothing better than to talk with and listen to me.

In general, very little was known of our parliamentary affairs. Many thought that the Separation would take years; others believed it would never occur, and that there would be a new Concordat. They did not understand the system of associations of public worship which the French Government intended to make the basis of the new arrangement. Nevertheless, pontifical diplomacy was attentively watching events and standing on the defensive. The monks seemed to enjoy the embarrassment of the French bishops, who had not defended them at the time of the laws against the congregations. In short, the most important religious event since the Reformation of the sixteenth century was taking place quietly, without any one seeming to realize it or to understand the serious results that would ensue.

I sent *Le Siècle* a few notes of what I had discovered, and I explained these notes in confidential letters to Louis Juttet, who was then chief secretary to M. Dubief, Minister of Commerce, who in my absence was in charge of the department of religious affairs.

I moved in various circles. I made the acquaintance of the erudite Count Ugo Balzani;¹ Baron Leopold Franchetti,²

¹ Died February 27, 1916. See *Revue Historique*, November-December, 1916, p. 449.

² Died 1917. See *Cultura Popolare*, November, 1917, p. 772.

then deputy, later senator; the minister Luigi Luzzati; the journalists Paul Ziegler,¹ François Carry, and Andrea Torre. One of the teachers of Christian archæology, Mgr. Wilpert, showed me the catacombs. I lunched with the Princes Giovanni Borghese and Fabrizio Ruspoli. I was in the habit of visiting Countess Ersilia Lovatelli (*née* Caetani), Countess Gabrielle Spalletti (*née* Rasponi), Signorina Dora Melegari, who wrote her novels in French like a real Frenchwoman,² and a Protestant converted to Catholicism, Miss Bessie Anstice Baker.

At Signorina Melegari's I met Count Ferdinando di Bojani, who continued to be friendly towards me for ten years, until his death in August, 1915. He was an old friend of the deputy secretary of state, Mgr. della Chiesa, the future Benedict XV.³ He made a name in religious scholarship which will be remembered by his editing Innocent XI's diplomatic correspondence with the nuncios. How did I attract the sympathy of this fervent Ultramontane? Doubtless because at the back of his mind he was always hoping to persuade me to return to the bosom of the Church.⁴

At Countess Spalletti's I met the Marchese di San Giuliano, who nine years later (in October, 1914) was to die Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was one of the most virulent enemies of Christianity I have ever been privileged to meet. Anacharsis Clootz used to pride himself on being "the personal enemy of Jesus Christ." San Giuliano might

¹ Correspondent of the *Figaro*, *Temps*, and *Matin*; died at the end of June, 1909.

² Died in 1924. There is a short notice of her in the *Dictionnaire Larousse*.

³ He wrote to me on September 15, 1914, about the election of the new Pope: "I have known him since he was a mere cleric; the only grounds of our friendship were a community of religious opinion and my appreciation of his virtues. He is not inclined to destroy everything."

⁴ Signor di Bojani wrote to me on March 18, 1915: "Why am I your friend? You ask me, and I reply: 'Because it seems to me that in your heart of hearts you still feel as a son towards the Church, and that you have merely shifted this feeling because of the injustice of men. Your work has brought you to accentuate the doubts inevitable in every inquiring mind which seeks out a path for itself. Let me believe that you still have struggles. And, where there is a struggle, which of the opposing parties shall be victorious is uncertain; I hope that the ancient and the primitive will prevail over the new.'" Signor di Bojani died in August, 1915; my last letter from him is dated April 10, 1915.

have said as much ; he professed a more thorough, fundamental and persistent scorn for Jesus than I have ever found in any other person save one. He ended by receiving the papal blessing, either expressly solicited or granted by the politic Benedict XV as a measure of expediency. Though the most irreligious of all the Italian ministers, he was the first to receive that honour.

San Giuliano had no sympathy with my dream of modernizing Christianity. Very different was the attitude of the old Marchese Vitelleschi, to whom M. Hyacinthe Loyson had introduced me. Himself a thorough sceptic, he advocated religion for the people, and wished our religion to be rendered tolerable for future generations. He was always urging Père Hyacinthe to return to the Church. He overwhelmed me with similar advice. "Do not touch the Bible," he would say, "or religion will crumble and nothing will remain. The Bible is its necessary foundation. It must be respected. Do not break with the Pope, for without him you would have neither mission nor authority. Take advantage of your stay in Rome to come to some agreement with the *Index*. But do not allow your submission to prevent your continuing liberal propaganda. Do not let a condemnation spoil your breakfast. Merely say to yourself that they are carrying on their trade. Begin to write more books immediately, only not on Biblical criticism. They will be put on the *Index*. Submit and continue to submit. This was the attitude of my friend, Father Curci. He did a great deal of good in Italy." I told the Marchese that such behaviour seemed to me farcical. He replied : "I see that you are a Frenchman. Life is a comedy. We must play it as honestly as we can ; but with all our honesty we shall not be able to prevent its being a farce."

My noble adviser thought that liberal priests should join together in a kind of Oratory.¹ It never occurred to him

¹ Vitelleschi, full of these ideas, confided them to Père Hyacinthe when the latter was staying at Rome in the beginning of 1906. Père Hyacinthe wrote to me : "The Marchese Vitelleschi urges enlightened and courageous priests openly to resist the *Index*, the Holy Office, and the Vatican, but without

that the hierarchy would not have tolerated any such organization, nor that for the endowment of such a society a Maecenas would have been needed. He died almost suddenly in the following year, administered to by his friend, Cardinal Macchi, a worldly prelate and consequently an excellent comedian. This apparently Christian death reminded me of a saying of Prince Giovanni Borghese: "I believe in nothing, but on my death-bed I shall call for a priest; it runs in my blood."¹ It was not only the Marchese di Vitelleschi that advised me to submit to the *Index*; Mgr. Duchesne gave me similar counsel.

To all these advisers I made the same reply: "I have nothing to say to an administration which has for two years appeared to regard me as a complete stranger, and which becomes more and more of a stranger to me. If it asks me to give an explanation of my conduct, I shall not refuse; and my explanation will close with this declaration: 'I will never retract books that are purely historical, unless I have been shown that they contain errors.'"

The supreme authority required nothing of me. Possibly, however, it may not have ignored me completely. Count di Bojani, who naturally several times advised me to submit, always asserted—and, he said, on good authority—that the

joining another Church or a new sect—simply by organizing themselves in a kind of school or oratory consisting of independent Catholic writers" (letter of January 1, 1906). "He asserts that if we touch the Bible, with the exception of certain legends, we leave Christianity without a foundation" (letter of February 19, 1906). "The Marchese V., who urges me to be prudent, said to me the other day: 'We are here to play a farce.' But he added: 'An honest farce, useful to others, and in accordance with our convictions'" (letter of March 5, 1906). The view that life is a farce seems to me somewhat common among the Italian clergy and nobility. Pius IX himself used to say: "Buffoons here, buffoons there; we are all buffoons!" That is not my philosophy. I agree with William James when he wrote: "A profound and ineradicable instinct exists in each of us which prevents our regarding life as a mere farce or elegant comedy. No, life is a bitter tragedy, and its bitterest part is that which we savour most; on the world's stage it is heroism, and heroism alone, that plays the chief part. It is in heroism, we feel, that the mystery of life lies hidden."

¹ On April 17, 1918, *La Croix* informed its readers of the death of Prince Giovanni Borghese, and commended to them this "Christian believer." I do not know whether nor how the Prince recovered his faith; but when I was in touch with him he did not believe in anything; "modernism"—that is, the adaptation of Catholicism to the present generation—merely interested him from the political and social point of view.

Index, if it published my act of submission, would not add the usual complementary phrase, *Et opus reprobavit*, to the formula, *Auctor laudabiliter se subjecit*. Now, Bojani was a friend of the Secretary to the *Index*, Father Esser. Might his words be taken as official?

I did not wish to stay in Rome without seeing what public opinion considers the greatest of the sights—the Pope. To solicit an audience did not seem fitting; consequently I had to proceed in some other way. A favourable opportunity occurred. Pius X was to open and bless a Lourdes chapel in the Vatican Gardens, begun under Leo XIII and recently completed. I asked my former bishop, Cardinal Mathieu, for a ticket for this ceremony. I had met him at the General Post Office one day when I was talking to François Carry. He recognized me at once, for he probably knew of my being in the Eternal City. “What are you two brigands plotting?” he said, as he came up to us. And he very kindly invited me to come and see him.

He received me graciously, and questioned me as to what had brought me to Rome. I replied, laughing, that, being a condemned author, I had come to study the administration that had censored me. The cardinal smiled, and, without speaking of submission, told me he would do whatever he could for me. Thereupon I asked him for a ticket. He procured one for me, and for a seat in the best position.

So I saw Pius X, and at the first sight of him all my prejudices against him vanished. Of the fifteen cardinals or bishops who surrounded him, he looked by far the best. Svampa, the Archbishop of Bologna, who was present, appeared more intelligent, but more like a statesman than an ecclesiastic. Cardinal Mathieu, with his lively look, glanced about him here and there in a manner which was not very edifying. In the midst of the ceremony Pius X delivered a homily: his sweet and penetrating tones were those of a saint. Later on I did not scruple to qualify him thus,¹ to the great annoyance

¹ For instance, in my review of the work of Debidour, *L'Eglise Catholique et l'Etat sous la troisième République*, which I published in *La Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, vol. lix (1909), p. 370

of certain liberal Catholics and of so-called freethinkers, who considered it impolitic and maladroit. When they remonstrated with me, I quoted, by way of consolation, one of Cardinal Mathieu's sayings: "The government of saintly popes has always been injurious to the Church."

On May 17 I started on my return journey. By the way I visited Mgr. Lacroix at his palace of Moutiers, and told him about my visit.

Were I to sum up my impressions of Rome, I would say that, with the exception of Pius X's homily, the capital of Catholicism inspired me with no religious emotion. But the administration of the Church seemed to me neither so senile nor so degenerate as Mgr. Lacroix and many other liberal Catholics had represented it. As for the Eternal City, I was as much at home there as in my native land; I felt a citizen and an heir of Rome—it was in two respects my ancient capital, my old metropolis.

In the curious education that was mine—I learned Roman before French history—I translated the *De Viris Illustribus* before reading the lives of my most illustrious fellow countrymen. My masters inspired me with admiration of Virgil and Horace before revealing to me the great poets of my country. I have even composed more Latin verses than French. Thus I could not behold without pleasure the seven hills, the ancient Tiber, the old thoroughfares, the Forum, the triumphal arches, and the Coliseum that had occupied my thoughts in childhood.

I am much more indebted to the second Rome than to the first. Of its spiritual empire, so much more vast than its temporal, my priesthood had made me the missionary. I had belonged to it entirely and unreservedly for thirty-five years—the greater part of my life. In her I venerated the abode of truth, the city of God on earth, the court of heaven. And, even disillusioned as I was, I still remained interested in this papal Rome, with its basilicas, its palaces, and all that had been the subject of my ecclesiastical studies.

And with what a lively enthusiasm did the third Rome thrill me, the capital of the new Italy, resuscitated by the

French Revolution and unified by the breach in the Porta Pia! What a will to glory is revealed in her monument to Victor Emmanuel II, her law courts, her broad avenues! Since she has rejected the Syllabus in favour of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, I believe I may hope that, side by side with France, she will open a new era of greatness for Latin civilization.

The halo of glories, past, present, and future, that hovers over Rome, blending with the dazzling brightness of the Roman atmosphere, renders her an incomparable enchantress. The light of Rome—that light, says Chateaubriand, “which seems ideal and more beautiful than nature!”¹ On my return, Paris seemed to me a little London: a cloudy sky, dark houses, dark clothes, barbaric heads, bustling people for whom time is money. Nevertheless, how much more intense is the life of the mind in Paris than in Rome! And is it not in Paris that idealists of all countries work most valiantly and most efficiently?

¹ Letter to M. de Fontanes (1804).

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW BOOK ON BIBLICAL CRITICISM

June, 1905–May, 1906

ON my return from Rome I resumed my work on *Le Siècle*, with a salary of one hundred francs a month. My leisure was occupied partly in studying the religious question on my own account, and partly in preparing the continuation of my *Question Biblique au XIX^e Siècle*—a continuation which described the most recent controversies.

At the end of August I went to Geneva to attend theological meetings—"the third International Congress of Liberal and Progressive Christianity."¹ As the programme formally declared that presence at the meetings did not imply approval of any of the doctrines represented or discussed, I did not in any way compromise myself. I merely showed that I considered I was perfectly free with regard to the Catholic Church, which does not like attendance at such meetings. Although it interested me intensely, the Congress gave me no reason for changing my position. The speeches of the Protestants—that is, of the majority of the members—seemed to me full of equivocations. The former lecturer of Notre Dame, Le Père Hyacinthe, despite his seventy years, was the most eloquent speaker.

A few days after my return from Geneva, on September 13, the editor of *Le Siècle*'s daily column, "Affaires Religieuses," M. Louis Juttet, died, having been knocked down by a motor-car. I was offered his post, with a salary of two hundred francs a month.

The Separation Law had been passed by the Chamber of

¹ For this Congress see its *Actes*, edited by Professor Edouard Montet, President of the Congress (Geneva : Librairie Georg et Cie, 1906 in 8°).

Deputies on July 3 (1905), and the Senate was to discuss it in November, so that it might come into force before the end of the year. It was desirable that this great reform should be carried out as soon as possible, and with justice or even with indulgence, so as not to have any injurious effect on the general election, which was to take place in the following May. I kept these objects in view in my work, in all sincerity, being careful to be accurate in my information, and to give advice calculated to keep peace and conciliate all interests. When the Pope's conduct seemed to me prudent and wise, I said so frankly,¹ although the republican newspapers were inclined to accuse him of being provocative. When ultra-Catholics incited the Pope, the bishops, or the faithful to commit some folly, I pleaded the cause of common sense. When, for example, an Ultramontane polemist, Père Fontaine, declared it useless for the bishops to meet to regulate Church affairs, or that they ought only to meet at Rome under the supervision of the Pope,² I maintained the advisability of their assembling, and suggested that Paris was the most natural place.³

The political circumstances and the theological discussions of the hour made me conclude that this would be a good opportunity to publish a MS. in which, for the last five years, I had been recording, as they occurred, the various discussions on the question of Biblical criticism. While French Catholics, more given to politics than religion, were trying to stir up civil war, it seemed to me wise to attempt a diversion, and to show that the teaching of the Church, for the sake of which they wanted to turn the country upside down, was not established on so firm a foundation as they believed. It also appeared to me time to enlighten those people who were always talking about Biblical criticism without understanding it. Finally, I was not averse to revealing to the public the

¹ For instance, in the article "L'Attitude du Pape," October 27, 1905, article signed "Xenos."

² Article by Père Fontaine, in *La Vérité Française*, November 1, 1905.

³ *Le Siècle*, November 24, 1905, and *Il Giornale d'Italia*, December 13. In the latter at that time I published several articles, in order that the Curia might read reflections which I thought timely.

exegesis of the Pope, that which he used in his encyclicals, that which he introduced into his Roman seminaries through two fanatics, Hetzenhauer and Delattre.

With regard to fundamental questions and persons, I made my MS. as moderate as possible, attempting to reconcile truth and discretion in controversies as recent as they were irritating. Before putting the finishing touches I submitted it to M. Loisy in November, 1905, and he read the proofs in February, 1906. My book was to be on sale in the second fortnight of April. After I had had a great deal of trouble in getting it from the printer on account of a printers' strike, it arrived at the binder's in the midst of a strike of that trade. An old workman was kind enough to bind a few copies every day, so that I could send them to my friends, as they were delivered, from about May 7. Meanwhile, advance sheets had been distributed, and a few newspapers reviewed the book as early as the end of April.¹

I sent one of my first copies to a person with whom I had been on excellent terms during my visit to Rome—Father Genocchi, Assistant-General of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (of Issoudun) and Rector of their college in the Via della Sapienza. He had given me information about the Biblical Committee, of which he was a member, and he had advised me publicly to denounce as a scandal the lectures of Father Hetzenhauer, in order that they might be suppressed.

Father Genocchi immediately took my book to the Cardinal-Vicar, Respighi, representing to him that this work would shake the faith of seminarists, deprive them of all respect for their professors, and that consequently it ought to be condemned at once, so that young students might not read it. The Cardinal-Vicar took his advice. On May 14, he promulgated a decree by which he forbade any one in the Roman diocese to sell, to read, or to possess my book under the penalty which would fall on the commission of a mortal sin.

¹ *Demain*, April 20, 1909 ; *Il Corriere della Sera*, April 24 ; *L'Italia*, April 25.

Anxious to make me believe that he had nothing to do with this incident, Father Genocchi did not acknowledge my book until business took him away from Rome. Then he wrote me from Florence, on May 17, the following letter:—

DEAR MONSIEUR L'ABBÉ,—

I left Rome a few days ago, and I read in the newspapers that *L'Osservatore Romano* has already published a condemnation of your book by the Cardinal-Vicar. It is not astonishing: only I did not expect a proceeding so rare and so sudden. The book is not yet on sale in Florence, nor at Sienna, whence I have just come. Can it be already in Rome?

Into this new work you have put all the excellences of your other books and something more—too much discouragement and scepticism, too much sarcasm against the Church, and, especially in the last chapter (“*La Vraie Question*”), too much poison for the faithful. The reading of this terrible chapter will shake the faith of many of our seminarists and young priests. They have not enough sound philosophy or modern apologetics to find their way in the midst of the difficulties you accumulate in your very clever reasoning. I fear that it will cause many to lose their faith and their religious ideal. The Holy Office and the *Index* will not fail to be occupied with you; but no decrees will prevent your book from being read. If only the dismay that will ensue could change the old-fashioned methods of our ecclesiastical studies!

I thank you for the copy of the book you have given me. I believe you will not take unkindly my frank and loyal expression of my opinion of it. Your pen might be so useful in the good cause!

I wish you peace and happiness in Our Lord, whom we ought never to snatch, even involuntarily, from the souls of our brethren.

With respect,

J. GENOCCHI.

Not yet suspecting that my correspondent had been the cause of my very rapid condemnation, I wrote explaining my views. He did not reply, and continued to act as a valiant defender of the faith.

When M. Aulard devoted to my book an article in the *Dépêche de Toulouse* which was as eulogistic of my work as it was unkind to Father Hetzenhauer, Mgr. Battifol sent the article to Father Genocchi, pointing out how deplorable it was that an unbeliever should, on account of Hetzenhauer, make use of my book to ridicule all ecclesiastical teaching. Father Genocchi brought both the letter and the article to the notice of the Cardinal-Vicar, doubtless with the design

of getting this ridiculous professor dismissed. Respighi retained him on the intervention of Cardinal Vivès y Tuto, who belonged to his Order ; but Père Delattre, of the Company of Jesus, whom I had equally derided, was obliged to resign.

What did Father Genocchi really think ? What motives prompted his conduct ? I had discovered that he had the broad ideas of intelligent missionaries who have come in contact with other religions.¹ Did he regard me as having gone beyond religious liberalism ? Was he playing a double game ? When I went to Rome Mgr. Lacroix had said to me : " If you see Genocchi, beware of him ; he is a traitor." I had not heeded this advice. Later, Roman modernists, who had placed the greatest confidence in him, accused him of having betrayed their secrets to Pius X. However that might be, since I had not sent my book to Father Genocchi in order that he should show it to the Cardinal-Vicar, I broke off my relations with him. Nevertheless, as his conversations had made a favourable impression on me, I said nothing but good of him in my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*. If I here relate what happened between us, it is because the story can do him no harm, seeing that the Pope has need of his services.²

Cardinal Respighi's condemnation of my book before it was on sale served as an advertisement—an edition of 1,100 copies was exhausted in a month. I immediately had another printed, revised, corrected, and enlarged. The *Index* condemned the work on December 11, 1906. I never knew why the Holy Congregation delayed seven months before conferring on the whole world that favour of mortal sin with which my readers in the diocese of Rome had been gratified immediately.

¹ In Hyacinthe Loyson's diary, under the date of February 21, 1906, I found the following lines about my correspondent : " The Rev. John Thomas, of the Bible Society Dépôt, Via Duca Macelli, spoke highly to me of Signor Genocchi, Director of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who came under the powerful and beneficent influence of Mr. Chalmers, a great missionary and martyr in New Guinea. Genocchi attributes many of the wrong ideas of the leaders at Rome to their ignorance of German and English religious literature."

² Benedict XV and Pius XI sent Father Genocchi as apostolic visitor to the Ukraine.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The First Plenary Assembly of the Bishops of France—A Petition to Pius X.

December, 1905–November, 1906

THE law separating the Churches from the State, promulgated in the *Journal Officiel* on December 9, 1905, plunged Catholics into complete chaos. How complete will be seen in the following letter, signed "A French Priest," which I caused to be published in *Le Temps* on June 2, 1906 :—

Pugnacious prelates, by way of reprisals, suppressed the traditional prayer for the Government, while others, more moderate, advised their priests to chant it with more fervour than ever, seeing that France had never stood in greater need of God's help. Some considered that demands for pensions and salaries should be addressed to the Government, others forbade their priests to make such demands, considering that such an action would imply acceptance of the new laws. Some with great ostentation organized unnotified diocesan and parochial associations which were to have nothing in common with the [Government's] associations for public worship, which they persisted in regarding as schismatic. Others, on the contrary, seeing that these groups could not long continue to exist outside the law, silently prepared the statutes of their future associations for public worship in conformity with what M. de Mun had not hesitated to call the law of apostasy.

In brief, because Pius X refused the bishops permission to assemble immediately, every private initiative, or I might say every individual whim, declared itself, and before the mocking gaze of their enemies, who had just won the decisive victory of separation, Catholics, drawn first this way and then that by cross currents, presented the sorry spectacle of an army without a plan, without organization, and, above all, without a leader, already demoralized by defeat, and destined to suffer the worst disasters through lack of enlightened, energetic, and resolute generalship. History will, I fear, judge severely the hesitations and uncertainties of those who ought to have commanded and disciplined troops which were capable of vigorous action, but which were allowed to mark time, to become enervated, and to fall into utter anarchy.

Those who tried to justify the Pope's conduct said that he had to wait for the administration of the law to be decided upon. If that really were the cause of these delays, why was not the plenary assembly convoked in March, immediately after the character of that administration had been made known? The truth is that the Vatican was waiting for the general election.

Seeing that the new Chamber would execute the laws passed by its predecessor, the Vatican brought itself to convoke the bishops in a plenary assembly, either because it was resolved to pay no attention to their opinion should it be contrary to its own, or that the Vatican wanted to place on the assembly the responsibility of its own decision should they agree with it. The meeting was fixed for May 30 and 31, and June 1, 1906. It was to be very important, since it was a question of knowing whether the bishops would oppose the law or submit to what had been done and try to make the best of it. Mgr. Lacroix wrote to me on May 17: "The opponents are making a terrific fuss. During the approaching assembly we must struggle to snatch the flock from their claws. I believe that in the Catholic Church of France characters are even more base than minds."

In order to influence the episcopate and public opinion, the Bishop of Tarentaise had an article written on the religious situation and the possible consequences of a meeting of the bishops. Mme. Waldeck Rousseau offered the article to *Le Figaro*, but the paper refused it for fear of displeasing its conservative readers. Then Mgr. Lacroix commissioned me to offer it to *Le Temps*, and he gave me full authority to make any omissions or modifications that might be required by the editor, M. Hébrard.

"Out of this MS., which is already excellent," the Bishop wrote to me, "you will have no difficulty in making a masterpiece; so that you need feel no embarrassment in taking upon you the authorship of the three articles. Only I must warn you that M. Adrien Hébrard divides his affection between Le Père du Lac¹ and a pretty actress of Le Théâtre Français.

¹ A Jesuit who was much occupied with politics. He died in 1909.

See if that inspires you with any mistrust, and, if so, in what direction."¹

The MS. was accepted, but I had to cut it down to two articles. They were entitled "Les Associations Cultuelles," and they appeared in *Le Temps* of May 29 and 31,² during the episcopal assembly.

Mgr. Lacroix, who had arrived on May 29, the eve of the meeting, lodged, as he always did at that time, at the Baron d'Ivry's (8 Rue Yvon-Villargeau). I went to see him every day in order to keep him informed and to receive any news that he might like to give me. The Pope had attempted to bind the bishops during the assembly by a command to keep silent under penalty of the suspension of their episcopal functions. But Mgr. Lacroix was not afraid.

On May 31 he told me the crowning decision of the assembly: the bishops had declared, by a majority of twenty-two, that it would be well for the Church to form canonical and legal associations.

Thus the opinion of the majority of the bishops conformed to that of the most cultured Catholic laymen, particularly of the *Correspondant* group. It was also the opinion of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, of *Le Journal des Débats*, and of *Le Temps*. One may say that it was the opinion of the élite of Frenchmen.

I immediately took two notes, which summarized what Mgr. Lacroix had told me, to *Le Temps* and *Le Siècle*.

The Vatican was extremely annoyed by these disclosures. It caused the passing of the resolution to be denied with more or less effrontery by its own organs and by *Les Semaines Religieuses* of the opposing bishops, so that many doubted whether any disclosures of the deliberations had ever been made. A vast intrigue was immediately set on foot with the object of nullifying the assembly's vote. In *Le Temps* of July 3 I disclosed all that I had been able, through Mgr.

¹ Letter of May 15, 1906.

² In *Le Temps* of June 2 I had to reply to the observations of a subscriber. In this reply I made use of a part of the MS. which I had deleted, the part quoted above, p. 215.

Lacroix, to discover of this intrigue. Here is an extract from my article, written in the form of the imaginary conversation of a French ecclesiastic :—

Many Catholics journeyed to Rome—for instance, the editor of *La Croix*, M. Féron-Vrau, sent his collaborator, Canon Masquelier, the person who writes under the name of Cyr and edits *La Croix du Nord*. Cardinal Merry del Val and the Pope told him that he ought to take the side of resistance and state all the arguments in its favour. You know whether *La Croix* obeyed. Other Catholic newspapers received, through various intermediaries, the same directions. Hence the unanimity with which the religious press followed that line of conduct.

By a strange coincidence, *Le Matin* of July 3 published a private conversation of the Abbé Lemire, deputy of Hazebrouck, which confirmed my article. "The Pope," he said, "is the prisoner of a faction who prevent his hearing and speaking. Catholics are for the most part blinded by bad newspapers, which keep up between Rome and Paris a whole system of biased telegrams and news.....*La Croix* is a prejudiced paper." In a letter to *Le Matin* the Abbé Lemire protested against the disclosure of his words in terms which seemed to confirm them.¹

The Nuncio, through M. Denys Cochin, tried to find out who was the author of my article. M. Hébrard, against whose indiscretion Mgr. Lacroix had warned me, did not keep my secret strictly.² He could not, however, disclose it completely. I had taken the precaution of signing the communications, which I had sent to his paper through M. Charles Dulot, with initials that were not mine. I had not yet been introduced to M. Hébrard; he had probably never heard my name, and doubtless did not know anything about me except for a few details that M. Dulot thought he was at liberty to give him. And this explains why among the papers of the Nuncio's auditor, Montigni, was found the draft of a note sent to Cardinal Merry del Val: "Article S. C. which *Le Temps* has published on *La Croix*.—The editor of *Le Temps* told Denys Cochin that it came from a priest, a friend

¹ See *Le Matin* of July 3, and *La Croix* of July 4, 5, and 11.

² See above, p. 217.

of Loisy and an expert in exegesis. Briand said he was pleased with this treachery because it enabled him to see where he was.....” Meanwhile the minutes of the plenary assembly had been sent to the Vatican. On August 10 Pius X replied to the bishops by an encyclical in which he treated their opinion on a compromise he disliked not merely as a dead letter, but as not existing.

The Pope’s decision caused profound surprise even among Ultramontanes. One of these, the Abbé Gayraud, when he read it on the morning of August 15, at Lourdes, where he then was, felt so thunderstruck that he let the newspaper fall from his hands. However, he pulled himself together, remembered that he belonged to a party, and telegraphed immediately to *L’Univers*: “Full and complete submission to pontifical instructions. Long live Pius X.” On his return to Paris he confessed in private that it was pure madness, but that he could not act otherwise.¹

On the 16th, the Bishop of Tarentaise made an appointment with me to meet him at Pougues, in a letter of which the following are the most important passages:—

On Monday I expect — to lunch. I have just written inviting him. It would be kind of you to come as well, so that we three may draft an article in grand style on the Pope’s letter. Prepare a few notes beforehand, and I will do the same.

You have no idea of the painful surprise I felt yesterday morning on reading the pontifical document. It is certainly the death-knell of Catholicism in France. And then there are three or four big lies on which it is important to enlighten public opinion. As for the scriptuary syllabus,² I am not greatly troubled about that. It will be a disaster in the intellectual world, but it will have no effect on the heart of the country, while resistance to the law would infallibly plunge us into the worst catastrophes, and it is the whole of France that would suffer.

The article in question ought, it seems to me, to be in the form of a letter from a French Archbishop to the Pope. It should treat at

¹ On the motives which induced Pius X to take this decision see the letter from Mgr. Mignot to Père Hyacinthe of January 8, 1906—*Le Père Hyacinthe*, iii, p. 292.

² The publication of this syllabus was said to be imminent. It did not appear until a year later, on July 3, 1907; it was the decree *Lamentabili sane exitu*.

once of the political, biblical, and social questions. Obtain information on these three points. The article must be a masterpiece.

I was too well convinced of the Church's weakness to take things so tragically as my correspondent, and I was too detached from her to put myself in an archbishop's skin and draw up such a reply to the Pope. Moreover, the idea did not appeal to me. I felt sure that all the French archbishops would protest, and that consequently the letter would have quite a different effect from what was intended. Mgr. Lacroix came round to my opinion, and the document was entitled: "Petition from a Group of French Catholics to Pius X."

What I could not do — undertook; and, as he is devoted to the Church, he wrote, if not a masterpiece, at least a fine and touching letter.

Then, on Monday, August 20, 1906, I arrived at Mgr. Lacroix's for lunch. — had brought the draft of the petition; we read it together. The contributions of the Bishop and myself consisted of a few merely formal corrections. We then exchanged views as to the organization of a campaign against the encyclical. The next day I returned to Paris.

Between the 23rd and 28th I published in *Le Siècle* a whole series of documents concerning the deliberations of the bishops, and in *Le Temps* of the 24th and 25th an account of the Assembly itself.¹

The effect was immense. It was clearly seen that the Pope had wanted to keep the conciliatory opinion of the bishops hidden, and to make them share the responsibility of his intransigence, or even bear it entirely. In order to console

¹ In *Le Correspondant* of February 10, 1920 (pp. 437-8), one may read: "M. Clemenceau's Government thought it Macchiavellian to have published in *Le Temps* and *Le Siècle* extracts from an account of the plenary assembly of bishops, which it had procured by means it would never avow" — (anonymous article by Mgr. Battifol). The documents then published were by me alone, and were given to me direct by Mgr. Lacroix, who allowed me to make my own arrangements for their disclosure. I did not see any member of the Government on the matter; I took the advice of no one, unless it was Mgr. Lacroix. I thought then, and I still think, that by allowing me to publish these documents, which disconcerted the fomentors of civil war, Mgr. Lacroix rendered an immense service to our country.

scandalized Catholics, the Besançon *Semaine Religieuse* published the following declaration :—

We recommend the clergy and the faithful of the diocese not to let themselves be moved by a press which has no authority on religious matters, nor especially by a quite recent publication of inaccurate documents and erroneous accounts concerning the plenary assembly of French bishops.

When the Vicar of Jesus Christ decides on matters of faith, we believe his judgment to be infallible, for Our Lord has charged him to strengthen his brethren. When he decides on matters of discipline, knowing that he has received plenary power to govern the Universal Church, we obey his sovereign authority religiously and without any reserve.

Such is the duty incumbent on bishops, priests, and the faithful ; such also are their safeguards and their consolation.

I replied by this anonymous note in *Le Siècle* :—

“The quite recent publication” of documents which the Archbishop of Besançon designates as inaccurate cannot but be that which was made here.

Those who hesitate between our words and the Archbishop's have only to come to the office of this newspaper. They may there compare our publication with the actual text of the documents of the Bishops' Assembly. They will see that we have reproduced them very accurately.

We are, moreover, not astonished by M. Fulbert Petit's denial. In an institution in which everything is founded on falsehood, it is obvious that one cannot rise so high without being an expert liar.

We do not envy Catholics any consolation they derive from the leadership of such chiefs.¹

My account of the Assembly had also brought le Comte Albert de Mun into the controversy, on account of the following passage :—

The Archbishop of Besançon, in his capacity of principal author of the statutes proposed to the Assembly by the commission, definitely

¹ The bishops, their *Semaines Religieuses*, and Catholic newspapers indulged in a veritable debauch of the most audacious lying. Some of their falsehoods have been pointed out in the book *Ce qu'on a fait de l'Eglise* (Paris ; Alcan), pp. 290-5 and 392-6. Mgr. Lacroix made a collection of them in a series of note-books concerned with each one of his colleagues, which he carefully kept up to date. In a letter from Julien de Narfon to Père Hyacinthe, dated April 6, 1908, I note this passage : “Cardinal Lecot has just committed the folly of giving the lie to my *Réponse de Rome à l'Assemblée de Bordeaux*, just as he had denied the truth of my account of that assembly. This time I replied to him in *Le Figaro*. The man's cynicism and lack of principle are nothing short of prodigious.”

took up their defence. He showed that the formation of the associations for public worship was necessary, and that even Catholics who had been most ardently in favour of resistance were now beginning to realize that necessity. He instanced the evolution which had taken place in the attitude of *La Vérité Française*. He told how the Comte Albert de Mun had called on him to say that he regretted having written that sensational article, in which he maintained that one should have nothing to do with "a law of apostasy." The story of this recantation made a great impression.

As soon as he saw the article, the Comte de Mun wrote to *Le Temps* protesting :—

Sassetot-le-Mauconduit, August 25.

I never said to Monseigneur the Archbishop of Besançon anything at all like that which is attributed to me by *Le Temps* of yesterday evening, in its article on the Assembly of Bishops.

ALBERT DE MUN.

I merely caused the paper to reply¹ :—

We assert that we have published a report of what was said and done at the Assembly of Bishops ; but we never thought of disclosing conversations between a prelate and M. de Mun. This distinction is necessary, because the author of the report maintains that an observation has been made as to the evolution of M. de Mun's mind from the time when he wrote his famous article on "the law of apostasy," and that this observation has made a great sensation among the bishops, a certain number of whom had been tempted to regard the eloquent deputy for Finistère as almost a father of the Church.²

On August 29, I sent the Pope the text of the petition in manuscript. In a note in *Le Siècle* on the following day, I announced the despatch of the document :—

A group of Catholics has just addressed to the Pope a letter dealing with the situation created by the encyclical.

This petition, which is complementary to that which the Twenty-three³ sent to the bishops, will show Pius X that there are Catholics who are not willing to renounce their liberty on points on which it is impossible to prove to them that submission to the laws of their

¹ August 26, 1906.

² According to an article published by *Le Correspondant* on February 20, 1920 (p. 435), le Comte de Mun said to the Archbishop of Besançon in conversation, "when all is said" and "by way of conclusion": "I strove for resistance; but, if I had been one of you, Monseigneur, I should doubtless, like you, have been swayed by my pastoral responsibility."

³ The petition of "the Twenty-Three," or of "the Green Cardinals"—so-called because of the number of the signatories, of whom many were members of the Institute—was drawn up by Brunetière and published in *Le Figaro* on March 20, 1906. It had been privately sent to the bishops a few weeks earlier.

country is not at variance with the laws which their conscience dictates. It is resistance, but in a sense contrary to that which the Pope desires.

It is said that the signatures to this petition, which is, it appears, as firm as it is respectful, are very numerous.

My intention was to publish this in *Le Temps*, which appeared that evening, and to reproduce the whole of it in the next morning's *Siècle*. The Bishop of Tarentaise, to whom I submitted the idea, replied by telegram: "I should prefer *Le Matin*. Try 1000. Urgent.—Moutiers." That meant that I should send the article to *Le Matin*, the paper which then had the widest circulation, and that I should ask for one thousand francs. Mgr. Lacroix never forgot the financial side.

On receiving this telegram, I went immediately—that is, on the 30th, at five o'clock—to offer the petition to *Le Matin*. They would have accepted it willingly had it been signed by several names. I could not give one. The next day I took it to *Le Temps*; they published it in their issue of September 2, with the following introduction, entirely in their own manner:—

A group of Catholics, including eminent personages, has just sent the Pope a letter on the situation created by the encyclical. This petition, a manifesto of the highest importance, is in the same spirit as that which "the Twenty-three" addressed to the bishops before the first assembly of the French episcopate. It has already been signed by several hundreds. The signatories, among whom figure a certain number of clergy, have decided, for reasons which they set forth at the beginning of the petition, not to make their names public at first. But, it appears, they have undertaken to make themselves known if circumstances require it.

M. Paul Sabatier was so enchanted with this document that he had it published, as a pamphlet, at his own expense, by Nourry. On the cover appeared the following announcement, penned by Mgr. Lacroix and M. Sabatier:—

Signatures to the petition will be received by M. Nourry, bookseller, 14 Rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, Paris.

They should be given in or sent in a double envelope. The outer envelope, with the address of M. Nourry, will be opened by him. The inner envelope, inscribed with the one word "Petition," will be opened by an ecclesiastic.

No name will be published without the special and formal authorisation of the signatories, and only then if circumstances render different proceedings useful or necessary.

In order to modify the impression it created, clerical newspapers immediately attributed the petition to Dreyfus and laymen or to Protestants. Soon afterwards, the Pope's inquisitors seized a letter from M. Paul Sabatier, containing active propaganda in favour of the document.¹ The official newspaper of the Vatican, *L'Osservatore Romano*, at once denounced Sabatier as one of the chief promoters of the petition, and called it "the petition plot," asserting that the signatures, asked for by the note on the cover, were to serve as confidential information indicating rebellious priests, from among whom the members of associations for public worship might be recruited.

M. Sabatier wrote the following letter to the pontifical newspaper :—

Chantegrillet, near Crest (Drôme), October 10, 1906.

To the Editor of *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Sir,—

In the issue of your honourable newspaper which appeared on the 9th inst. you do me the honour to mention me in connection with the "petition addressed by a group of French Catholics to his Holiness," and to attribute to me all manner of manoeuvres for the organization of schismatic associations for public worship.

Permit me to inform you :—

(1) That I was made aware of the text and the existence of the petition by *Le Temps*.

(2) That never have I been concerned in any way with schismatic or non-schismatic associations for public worship. If my opinion on this matter is of any interest to you, then I may tell you that I consider the formation of schismatic associations as childish and unwise.

Of mysteries and subterfuges I have no need. Having admired the petition, I sent it to friends, just as it has occurred to me to send them—for different reasons—*L'Osservatore Romano* or *La Civiltà*. I confess that I hope I was not the only one to have been overcome

¹ Among Marcel Hébert's papers I have found a letter from M. Sabatier on this subject. He wrote to his correspondent on September 13 : "In four or five days you will receive the complete text of 'the Petition from a group of Catholics to Pius X.' It is desirable that this should be made known in Belgium. I will send you as many copies as you want. The signatories, pursued by the terriers of orthodoxy, are obliged to run to earth."

by emotion on reading those pages, which, coming after so many political documents and preoccupations, were of the first excellence, appealing as they did to the supreme ecclesiastical authority in tones of religious agony.

Be kind enough, sir, to receive the expression of my most distinguished sentiments.

PAUL SABATIER.¹

The object of the note on the cover was to enlist signatories whose names would justify the letter being described as coming from "a group of Catholics." Perhaps, also, Mgr. Lacroix and Pastor Sabatier wished to know on what partisans they could rely in case of need. As I was "the ecclesiastic" whose work it was to open the letters from would-be signatories, I may say with full authority that there were precisely eight, including one from a Swiss student, who described himself as a freethinker.

M. Hyacinthe Loyson thanked the unknown hand that had sent him the petition. "I will not sign this manifesto," he said, "on which my name, in the impossible event of its appearing, would compromise those that accompanied it. You think that one ought to submit, whatever the Pope says or does. I think that one ought to resist. Thus did St. Paul with regard to St. Peter at Antioch: 'I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed' (Galatians ii, 11)."

Though it enlisted but few signatories, the petition none the less made a certain impression. A clerical publicist thus summarizes its principal results:—

Messrs. Clemenceau (Minister of Home Affairs), Ferdinand Buisson (President of the Parliamentary Commission, who elaborated the law of 1905 and caused it to be carried), and Aristide Briand (Minister of Education, of the Fine Arts, and of Religion) borrowed from it the substance of their speeches and their calumnious insinuations against the papacy: the first in a speech delivered at La-Roche-sur-Yon, on September 30, 1906; the second at the Radical and Radical-Socialist Congress at Lille, in October, 1906; the third in November, 1906, in the Chamber.²

¹ Letter reproduced in *Le Siècle* of October 14.

² Aventino, *Le Gouvernement de Pie X*, p. 312. For Aventino see my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*.

CHAPTER XX

THE EXECUTION OF THE SEPARATION LAW

The Inventories—The Second and Third Plenary Assemblies—Schismatic Farces.

January, 1906–August, 1907

MOST Catholics throughout the world piously believed Pius X when he told them, in his encyclical of August 10, 1906, that the French episcopate had almost unanimously rejected the Separation Law; although the majority had recognized the possibility of establishing a régime which would be at once canonical and legal. Extraordinarily strong feeling ensued. Abroad, all Catholics believed that France was persecuting the Church; in France, single-minded Catholics thought they were being persecuted. Adversaries of the republican régime saw in these events an opportunity for overthrowing it, and, whenever they could, they rushed the simple-minded faithful into opposition to the law. They were ready to let loose a civil war. They felt that so favourable an occasion would never recur, and that if the separation cause triumphed the result would be an irremediable weakening of the conservative spirit.

But the political exploiters of Catholicism did not wait to rouse the tempest until the Pope had made his decision. As early as January, 1906, they organized tumultuous protests against the making of inventories of church furniture. This conservative measure was represented as a foretaste of the robbery that was to follow. Several important Catholics, led by Ferdinand Brunetière,¹ approached Cardinal Richard with the request that he would put an end to this tumult; but the saintly Cardinal, a Breton who was a true descendant of *les Chouans*, in a pastoral letter of April 26, 1906, declared his admiration for "these spontaneous manifestations of

¹ The well-known writer and critic; almost the Sainte-Beuve of his day.—TRANS.

Catholic faith and devotion to the Church." I found out as much as I could about all these matters. And to the following I can bear witness.

At Paris, among the great variety of those who took part in the disorders of "the inventories," as they were called, were some who merely wished to indulge in the pleasure of "thrashing the watch," as our fathers used to say;¹ others were paid, and their employers were less inspired with devotion to the Church than with the desire to embarrass the Government. As may well be imagined, this artificial agitation made those who had not completely abandoned the future of French Catholicism to Providence very anxious.

To Mgr. Lacroix it seemed that the publication of documents concerned with the first assembly of the bishops and the publication of the petition ought to result, not merely in the enlightenment of public opinion, but more especially in the recapture of the flock at the second assembly, which was held from September 4 to 7, 1906. The episcopate placed itself entirely in the hands of the Pope. A third assembly met between January 15 and 19, 1907. Pius X then concluded that he could do without this pretence at deliberation. Henceforth he governed the Church of France directly.

As he had informed me about the first assembly, so Mgr. Lacroix revealed to me the secrets of the two others, and I made use of them in due season. In *Le Siècle* of December 16 (1906) I published the resolutions passed at the second meeting. The *Gazette de France*, when reproducing them, said: "They have probably been communicated to the Protestant paper by the prelate on whom the paper lavishes compliments from time to time." Already the Deputy, Jules Delahaye, had written in *L'Autorité* of September 7: "Is it true, as reported, that Mgr. Lacroix, after having violated the secrecy of the first assembly, commanded by the Pope under penalty of excommunication, arrogated to himself the right to violate the secrecy of the second? It is possible:

¹ The best document I know on this point of view is the letter from Vicomte Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé to Henri de Pontmartin, dated February 6, 1906, and published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* of April 15, 1922.

every one knows that the liberalism of this flibbertigibbet stops at nothing and rushes in everywhere."

This shows that Mgr. Lacroix was suspected. As early as the end of August, 1906, the Nuncio's auditor, Mgr. Montagnini, had written in his notes: "It is said that it was Mgr. Lacroix who betrayed certain secrets." And on September 17 (1906) the same Montagnini, informing Cardinal Merry del Val of an interview he had just had with the Bishop of Troyes, Mgr. de Pelacot, wrote: "With regard to that unfortunate violation of secrecy, the same bishop did not hesitate to tell me that he was suspicious of the Bishop of Tarentaise." When Montagnini's papers were published, in the beginning of the following year, Mgr. Lacroix sent the following denial to the newspapers that had reproduced these two quotations:—

Moûtiers (Savoy), April 11, 1907.

To the Editor.

DEAR SIR,—Although a very high prelate of the Roman Curia has declared the information furnished by Mgr. Montagnini to be devoid of common sense, you will not think it unfitting for me to protest against a rumour which you have helped to spread and according to which I disclosed to the press secrets of the first assembly of bishops.

This rumour is absolutely false, like so many other rumours emanating from the same source.

Be kind enough to accept, dear sir, the assurance of my very distinguished sentiments.

LUCIEN LACROIX, Bishop of Tarentaise.

If Mgr. Lacroix was widely suspected of indiscretions with regard to the episcopal assemblies, I also was suspected in some measure. On February 11, 1907, I published information about the third Assembly in *Le Temps* and *Le Siècle*. The next day *La Gazette de France* said: "Two newspapers, *Le Temps* and *Le Siècle*, have published notes, apparently official, on the declaration of the bishops. The note in *Le Temps* is attributed to Abbé Houtin."

I was at this time carrying on a campaign against the Vatican, in *Le Siècle* daily, in *Le Temps*¹ occasionally, and

¹ I contributed unsigned information or short unsigned articles to *Le Temps*. I have preserved only two of these communications among my papers: "Why this Mystery?," September 1, 1906; "The Pope and the Bishops," September 4, 1906.

230 EXECUTION OF THE SEPARATION LAW

also in the *Times*, whose correspondent in Paris, Mr. William Lavino,¹ I often met.

As in every country the Catholic press was declaring that the French Government was persecuting the Church and trying to destroy it, the English Ultramontanes were very dissatisfied with the attitude assumed by this great newspaper, and they tried to discover the source of its information. On this question *L'Univers* of April 8, 1907, published, under the title "The Informers of the *Times*," a letter from one of its friends in the Isle of Wight—that is, from a Benedictine of Solesmes who had emigrated—a letter which involved me in the matter of the two *Times* articles signed "A French Catholic." I did not reply. I had written two articles in the *Times*, signed with my own name. It would never have occurred to me to describe myself straight off as "A French Catholic." The "French Catholic" was Mgr. Lacroix,² whom I had placed in communication with Mr. Lavino.

The French Government was justified to the whole world by the fact that the episcopate had found it possible to adapt itself to the conditions established by the Separation Law. The law may be considered hard or tactless, but it ought not henceforth to be denounced as persecuting or incompatible with the constitution of the Catholic Church. Responsibility for the events that followed must be assigned to Pius X.

As the Pope's decision rendered impracticable several dispositions of the law, the Government sought to give him trouble. With money from the secret funds it incited three movements of opposition.

¹ Died at Paris, August 4, 1908. I published two articles (signed with my own name) in the *Times*—one on September 21, 1906, on the Associations for Public Worship in France and in Prussia; the other on October 1, on the Bishops and the Separation Law. I also assisted Mr. Lavino in a controversy with the Benedictines, Dom Olivieri and Dom (later Cardinal) Gasquet (the *Times*, February 11 and 21 and April 22 and 29, 1907). I also contributed to *The Nineteenth Century and After*, for July, 1907, an article entitled "The Views of an Anglican Ultramontane," a refutation of several articles published in England by la Comtesse de Franqueville, née Lady Sophia Palmer. I naturally wrote the article in French. It was translated by Mr. Robert Dell.

² His articles appeared in the *Times* of February 28 and March 2. The gist of them was reproduced by *Le Siècle* on March 5, 1907.

The first manœuvre was confided to an Abbé Toiton, whose curious story is too complex to be outlined here. He founded a newspaper, *La France Catholique*, for which Clemenceau promised him a grant of ten thousand francs a month, beginning in September. The first number appeared, I believe, at the beginning of October; 50,000 copies were printed and sent to all French priests. Most of the contributors wrote under pseudonyms. Among them were M. Julien de Narfon and le Père Gaffre. In November or December, Clemenceau, displeased with one of Toiton's articles, discontinued his grant. For a while Toiton attempted to go on with the paper at his own expense. The joint-stock company which published it went bankrupt on November 15, 1908.

La France Catholique had confined itself to expressing constant regret that the Pope had not allowed the associations for public worship to be formed; but it did not preach disobedience. The priests of poor dioceses, enraged by the reductions in their salaries which the bishops had been immediately compelled to make, and by the thought of losing all Church property owing to the intransigence of Pius X, uttered cries of distress. Toiton had opened his paper to their grievances. "The perpetrators of so much wrong," he wrote, "will be severely judged at the bar of history." The Abbé extolled unity, but he sowed division and discontent. His paper appealed to the timorous. Clemenceau wanted a paper which would organize the execution of the law in defiance of the Pope—a paper which would appeal to those who were capable not merely of groaning, but of rebelling. He confided this task to M. Félix Meillon, an ex-priest and ex-Protestant pastor—director, since 1904, of a "Society of Priests,"¹ founded by Protestants. As he claimed to be in regular communication with a large number of ecclesiastics who were eager for religious reforms, not Protestant but Catholic, the ministers thought they could utilize these ecclesiastics against the Pope. Consequently M. Meillon was charged to urge them in the direction of associations for

¹ See *La Crise du Clergé*, 2nd edition.

public worship. They were to serve as intermediaries between liberal priests and communes desirous of placing the celebration of public worship on a legal footing. M. Meillon received 30,000 francs, with which he was to establish a secretariat and a newspaper which should be the organ of the movement.

This was done. On October 6, 1906, appeared the first number of *L'Avènement, Organe des Associations Cultuelles Catholiques*. I do not think the paper succeeded in constituting ten associations.

While Clemenceau was dealing with MM. Toiton and Meillon, the Minister of Education and Religions, Aristide Briand, the real originator of the Separation Law, was opening negotiations for similar services with a gifted publicist, Henri Durand Morimbau, known by the pseudonym of "Des Houx."¹

A former pupil of L' Ecole Normale Supérieure, a graduate of the University, and a former professor in the Chambéry Lycée, this condottiere had at first been in the pay of Mgr. Dupanloup and Cardinal Pitra. Since 1886 he had been on the staff of *Le Matin*. There it was that he carried on his campaign. He began by protesting timidly and respectfully against the Pope; then he organized a "League of the Catholics of France" for the creation of associations for public worship.²

If a real schism were to be created, it would be necessary to have at least one bishop to take the lead, and to assure him an income for life equal in amount to the revenue of his see. For such an operation a great deal of capital was required. Des Houx, who had his own reasons for economy, did not try to secure a real bishop hitherto in communion with the Pope; he preferred to buy at the lowest price a less exigent adventurer, one René Villatte, who called himself Archbishop

¹ In a lecture delivered at Paris on April 7, 1907, and published in the April number of *France et Evangile*, Henri des Houx himself admitted that he was Briand's instrument. Naturally such an admission made the round of the Catholic press. It is found, for example, in *La Croix* of May 15; in *La Gazette de France* of May 17; in *La Semaine Religieuse* of Cambrai, June 8, 1907.

² His articles were collected in a volume entitled *Guerre au Papisme, La France aux Français* (Paris, Juven; Jan., 1907).

of the old Catholic Church in America,¹ but whose consecration Rome had declared null. By virtue of the episcopal powers he arrogated to himself, Villatte instituted a parish in La Rue Legendre, in the former chapel of the Barnabites, to-day the Church of Saint Charles de Monceau. He appointed a priest, and gave him a few adventurers for curates—priests, or calling themselves priests. The church was opened on February 3, 1907, amidst stirring incidents.

In spite of all the boasting of Government and Protestant newspapers, the movement for the formation of public worship associations was still-born. The public regarded it as a farce. Clemenceau, considering that his colleague Briand had legally overcome the difficulties raised by the Pope, refused to give it any more money. *L'Avènement* died, after an existence of three months, and its editor became secretary of "La Ligue des Catholiques de France," founded and presided over by Des Houx, who had until then repudiated all connection with the ex-pastor's "Secrétariat des Associations Cultuelles."

Having ceased to receive any Government grants, MM. Des Houx and Meillon, in March, 1907, went to London and Edinburgh, and gave a series of lectures to obtain support for "that valiant Catholic, apostolic, and French church in La Rue Legendre, beaten by such wild tempests."² Their tour was a failure.

As for the priest of La Rue Legendre, having been obliged to resign, he started off to interest the patriarchs of the East in the French schism. He was certainly not an ambassador fitted for such negotiations, and it was in vain that he visited first Jerusalem, then Constantinople and the different chiefs of the old heretical churches. Having spent all his money, and not knowing how to return to France, he went to the apostolic delegate at Constantinople, Mgr. Tacci, and told him that grace had been vouchsafed to him and that he repented of his sins. Mgr. Tacci sent him to Rome,

¹ On June 1, 1925, Mgr. Villatte made a solemn abjuration to Mgr. Ceretti, apostolical nuncio at Paris.

² *France et Evangile*, March, 1907.

where, after he had made a complete abjuration, his sacerdotal powers were restored to him. Later he was sent back to France to join a community for fallen priests. He escaped in August, 1909, and returned to Paris to see if he could not start again there.

Such, in broad outline, is the history of the Government's secret attempts to oppose the Pope, and such were its chief instruments. MM. Toiton, Meillon, Des Houx, Roussin, and a few of his acolytes, at times came to me, some for counsel, others for information. My articles on *La Crise du Clergé* showed that I was well informed, and soon it even came to be said that "my famous green cards" contained "the names and the confidences of eight hundred modernists."¹ I at once told these gentlemen that from the moment the Pope had condemned associations for public worship Catholics could not form them, that a schism was not practicable, and that in the very terms of the law an association became illegal as soon as the faithful had denounced it to the Conseil d'Etat, or the bishop had condemned the priest who acted for it. As they were paid for their work, they would not listen to reason; but their visits showed me the secrets of the comedy and prevented my having the slightest illusion as to its dénouement.

These events prove—just like the miserable attempt at Catholic reform made by Le Père Hyacinthe between 1879 and 1893—the truth of the words often attributed to the Consul Bonaparte: there is not enough religion in France to allow of a schism.² Those who, groundlessly fearing a schism, caused the French clergy to lose their property, made a disastrous mistake.³ The Archbishop of Albi told me this

¹ Inquiry conducted by *Le Progrès de Lyon*, October, 1907; articles collected in a pamphlet entitled *L'Action Cléricale*.

² The words attributed to the First Consul are: "As for Christians in France, I recognize none but Catholics and Protestants. There is not enough religion in this country to make a third."

³ "Nearly five hundred millions worth of francs of ecclesiastical property, revenues of parish churches, of abbeys, and of presbyteries, passed into the hands of the State, which did not desire to seize them. M. Briand said so several times" (*Comité National d'études sociales et politiques*, pamphlet No. 245. *Le nouveau statut de l'Eglise Catholique en France*, lecture by M. Pierre Cot and discussion). The words quoted are those of M. Hébrard de Villeneuve.

one day in the parlour of Saint Sulpice, where he had asked me to meet him during one of the assemblies of bishops. And in his sweet, tranquil, firm voice he added: "This is what Dom Guéranger, Cardinal Pie, and Louis Veuillot have led us to. They wanted an infallible Pope; they have one."¹

¹ Mgr. Mignot, in the same conversation, also told me how he had tried, on December 25, 1901, to make Leo XIII understand that a schism is impossible in France. He assured me afterwards that, though he may have thought he could risk this attempt with Leo XIII, he had never had any idea of trying to repeat it with his successor.

CHAPTER XXI

VISITS TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO ENGLAND

September to October, 1907

DURING their stay in Paris, at the beginning of 1907, Father and Mme. Hyacinthe were officially asked by the Committee to be present at "the International Congress of Unitarians and other liberal thinkers and religious workers," which was to be held at Boston at the end of September. Considering that they were too old and feeble to undertake so long a journey, they proposed that I should avail myself of the invitation given to them.

Two years before, I had attended a similar Congress at Geneva without pleasure or profit.¹ The Boston Congress seemed to me likely to be more interesting, because there I should be able to observe on the spot, in the country of their origin, the new and liberal forms of religion which I had studied in connection with Americanism, and which seemed to me those of the future.

Consequently I accepted the proposal. Le Père and Mme. Hyacinthe Loyson gave me an introduction to one of the chief members of the Committee of the Congress, who was then in Europe. This was M. Montet, Dean of the Faculty of Theology at Geneva; and M. Montet spoke for me to the American Committee. They offered me a sum of three hundred dollars (about fifteen hundred francs) for my travelling expenses, on condition that I should read them a report on any subject I liked to choose. I took "The Catholic Crisis" as my theme, prepared my discourse, and made ready to start.

¹ See *ante*, chap. xviii, p. 211.

As it turned out, circumstances deprived me of the pleasure I should otherwise have derived from anticipation of this visit. Not only did Pius X issue his neo-syllabus¹ in July, but the publication of an encyclical was said to be imminent, and I was afraid of being absent during a controversy in which I might usefully defend the cause of religious liberalism. I decided to remain on the other side of the Atlantic for as short a time as possible—a resolution which my limited travelling allowance rendered it easy to keep.

As Cook's Agency promised to reduce the price of the ocean journey if a certain number of those going to the Congress bought their tickets from them, I went to their office. Only one Frenchman had booked—namely, M. Gaston Bonet-Maury, Professor in the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Paris. Cook declared that they would arrange for us to sail on a Cunard boat. This pleased me. To travel in English company would help me to rub up my English.

I left Paris on September 1, arrived at Liverpool on the afternoon of the next day, and embarked on the *Ivernia* on the 3rd. On board I met M. Bonet-Maury and a score of English Unitarians. The latter seemed to me pleasant, frank, and for the most part little interested in religious or even intellectual questions. They regarded the Church Congress as an excursion. Among them was a young and pretty woman, the only woman pastor in Europe at that time—Miss Gertrude von Petzoldt. Born in Prussia, of a family of soldiers, she had at first studied to be a teacher, and she had gone to England to learn the language. She considered herself called to the ministry, entered the Unitarian College at Oxford, and became a pastor. In the winter of 1906–7

¹ The decree *Lamentabili sane exitu*. I published my reflections on it in *Le Siècle* of July 23, article signed "C. R."; in *Le Censeur* of August 3, article signed "Xenos"; in *Pages Libres* of August 10, article signed "Abbé X." A note by the editor introduces this article as "the opinion of a modernist priest." This note was inserted without my knowledge. I had told one of the editors of the review (the one who asked me for the article, M. Maurice Kahn) that I was not or that I had ceased to be a modernist—that is, I no longer believed in a reconciliation between the Roman Church and criticism. Besides, my article clearly indicated it. With regard to my article in *Le Siècle*, Mgr. Lacroix wrote to me on July 28: "The article 'C. R.' on the syllabus is very, very good, and well done. Mgr. M (ignot) has greatly appreciated it."

she returned to her native land and preached in a chapel. It was the first time that a woman had been seen in a German pulpit. I do not think she had a large congregation in her church at Leicester. "It is difficult to attract people," she said. She told me that in order to draw a crowd on Easter Sunday she had invited a preacher to discuss women's suffrage in the pulpit. I told her that such a sermon on such a day seemed to show that the Unitarian denomination and its pastorate had ceased to be Christian.

That she should be in the ministry did not shock me. I have always agreed with Rear-Admiral Reveillère: "From the time that there ceased to be a victim to be slain, as in pagan days, from the day when the priest ceased to be a butcher or an executioner, there ceased to be any ground for the exclusion of women from the priesthood. Religion being above all things a matter of imagination and of emotion, woman is better fitted for religious functions than man."¹

We arrived at Boston on September 12, ten days before the Congress. I spent this interval with a friend in the United States with whom I had corresponded. He took me to New York, Baltimore, Washington, and Philadelphia. We returned to Boston on the 22nd, for the opening of the Congress on the evening of that day.

The Congress showed how numerous and wealthy are the Unitarians of Massachusetts. The Government Palace was illuminated every evening. We were solemnly received there by the Governor. At the opening meeting in Symphony Hall impressive hymns were sung by two choirs—one of men, the other of women—each numbering a hundred voices. On the last day there were a great dinner and reception in one of the chief hotels of the town. We visited Concord, and saw the house of Ralph Waldo Emerson. We went to the famous University of Harvard, and to Plymouth, the port at which the Pilgrim Fathers landed. At Fairhaven we saw a church, a library, and a college erected by the munificence of the Unitarian multi-millionaire, Mr. Rogers, whose

¹ *Libres Pensées Chrésiennes*, p. 46.

liberality would have been more admirable had not the donor, who had been born poor, made his immense fortune in somewhat dubious syndicates and speculations.

I read my account of the Crisis in the Catholic Church on September 25. It may be seen in the minutes of the Congress,¹ and in its original form, which is better, in the second edition of my *Crise du Clergé*. I may, however, summarize it here.

After having indicated that all Christians are in the throes of a religious crisis, I showed the particular manner in which the crisis is affecting the Roman Church. Taking into account tendencies likely to be typical of a more or less homogeneous group, one in which are included necessarily persons whose opinions differ slightly in various ways, I divided the numerous Catholics who are dissatisfied with traditional teaching into three categories:—

(1) Liberal Catholics, properly so-called, after the manner of Montalembert, Lacordaire, and Dupanloup. They believe in the Roman Church as a divine institution, but they wish to separate faith from the theocratic traditions of the Middle Ages.

(2) Theists and Deists, who persist in calling themselves Catholics, and who may be so called because of their adherence to certain traditions of the past.

(3) Atheists, born Catholics, and who do not leave the Church, but wish to transpose and modernize its dogmas in order to give people a religion more in accordance with contemporary mentality.

I represented all these innovators confronted by an intransigent papacy. In the words of Döllinger: "It is not always the same Pope; it is always the same papacy." I concluded thus:—

¹ The exact title of the volume is *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion: Proceedings and Papers of the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals Held at Boston*, edited by Charles W. Wendte, International Council, Boston, Mass., 8vo, 651 pp. The volume contains fifty-five portraits, including my own, reproduced from a photograph taken on May 14, 1907, in the studio of Eugène Pirou, 5 Boulevard Saint-Germain. For *La Croix's* treatment of my report see my *Histoire du Modernisme Catholique*, pp. 427-8.

Sons and heirs of the reformers of the sixteenth century, you are now witnessing, in the Roman Church which anathematized your fathers, the commencement of a struggle more scholarly and more fundamental than that of Wickliffe, of John Huss, of Luther, and of Calvin. Great are our sorrow and distress, for we see falling about our ears the ancient and venerable sanctuary in which we believed we were in safety. As for you, who have always regarded the ecclesiastical institution of Rome as not being the whole Church, and to whom its action has often seemed nothing but tyrannical oppression, you cannot be surprised at the ruin of our hopes, at our sufferings, and at the battles that await us. Your fathers and you yourselves have passed through the same vicissitudes, and, with the sweat of your brows and the tears of your hearts, you have rebuilt religious edifices in which you live in peace, full of energy for the service of God and of humanity! In our present agony, your experience remains our encouragement and our hope.

My conclusion was optimistic up to a certain point, since I did liberal Protestants the honour of believing that their history might be useful to disillusioned Romans. I was still a kind of theological evolutionist. I still believed that there might be a natural evolution from the old religion of the past into the new religion of the future. Nevertheless, I expressed myself with less confidence than in the conclusion of my *Crise du Clergé*, composed only nine months earlier. The neo-syllabus had appeared in the interval, and I was smarting from the blow of the encyclical *Pascendi*, of the publication of which I had just heard. I had lost all hope in the Church of Rome.

I read my speech in a Congregational church called "The Ancient Church of the South." The meeting opened with an organ recital, followed by an address from the pastor of the church, the Reverend George A. Gordon. Two other speeches preceded mine—those of M. Bonet-Maury and M. Tony André, pastor of the Reformed Church at Florence. This is the only time in the whole of my life that I have spoken in a church. At Mongazon most of the professors never preached. In the beginning of my professorial career I was too busy to enter the pulpit, and towards the end my reputation for liberalism was too well established for priests to invite me to do so. Accordingly, only once in my whole life have I ever preached, and that was to deny the divinity

of Jesus and to proclaim the disintegration of Christian orthodoxy. Was there ever a preacher more veracious and more sincere?

During the Congress I attended services which were very modern in form, and I heard sermons which were very secular. The preacher's expressions appeared to me somewhat equivocal—he was obviously anxious not to outrage certain conventions. As for the Congress itself, it seemed to me less an assembly and a federation of apostles of religious liberalism than the regular parliament of a sect, eager on this occasion to exhibit a few foreigners, introduced as vassals and satellites. Moreover, I doubted whether the new phase of Unitarianism was desirable. The opinions of the old Unitarians to whom I listened, of men like President Charles William Eliot¹ and Pastor Edward Everett Hale,² were as broad as they were religious. The orators of the succeeding generation sounded somewhat pontifical. Of all those to whom I listened the one who pleased me most was Thomas Masaryk, the future President of the Republic of Czecho-Slovakia.³

In general, I found Unitarians of the United States (I do not refer to those of England) distinguished citizens, with limited families, proud of their wealth and their culture, philanthropic, but disdainful of the common herd, content to leave them to their superstitions, yet ready to be annoyed by their aberrations. In my opinion, they differ from French Protestants in being freer from old formularies and old ceremonial rites. They are less inartistic in the architecture of their churches, less cold in manner. One never finds among them that *Huguenot* air which is too common among their French co-religionists.

Unitarian worship, as I found it in some American churches, appealed to me as the form of religion best adapted to modern times—that to which I aspired. But these Unitarians were obviously so little given to proselytizing that not for one

¹ Born in 1834. He was President of Harvard from 1869 till 1909.

² He died in 1909, at the age of 88.

³ For Masaryk's religion, see a pamphlet by Blaha, *T. G. Masaryk* (Orbis edition; Prague, 1923), p. 113.

instant could I hope they would ever come to France to found a church like those which pleased me so much in their own country. On the other hand, I was never tempted to seek a Unitarian pastorate in the United States. I always believed it my duty to work in my native land.

I left Boston on October 1 on the *Saxonia* with M. and Mme. Jean Réville, who had also been at the Congress. M. Jean Réville, an ex-pastor, had recently been appointed Professor at the Collège de France. A deeply religious man, he was also sincerely liberal. Though he had published books, he never spoke of them. In this he differed from M. Bonet-Maury, who never lost an opportunity of enumerating his past, present, and future productions.

From Liverpool, where we landed on Thursday, October 10, I went to see one of my correspondents, the Reverend Arthur Galton, Vicar of Edenham, in Lincolnshire.

We had begun to correspond that very year. After having read my works, he had sent me his—among others a little apologia relating a part of his life.¹ Here it is in outline: Born in the Anglican Church and of an upper middle-class family (that of the anthropologist Sir Francis Galton), educated in a public school, then in the University of Cambridge, he was attracted to the Church of Rome when a youth by his feeling for romantic history. In the Jesuit church of Farm Street, London, in April, 1875, he abjured his Anglican faith and entered the Oratory. After having been ordained priest, he went to Rome for the first time, and this was the beginning of his disillusionment. It was to be complete. About 1885 he returned to the Church of England.

This was all I knew about Mr. Galton, when it occurred to me to go and visit him. He had seemed to me so pleasant and so well informed that I wanted to talk to him. I found a thin, dry, alert man, with very distinguished manners and an extremely cultured mind. Two sentences of his friend and master, Walter Pater, served to sum up his experience of life: "The

¹ *Rome and Romanizing: Some Experiences and a Warning*; 2nd edition, 1900.

way to perfection is through a series of disgusts"; "The perfection of culture is not rebellion, but peace."¹ He lived in peace in his little benefice—like many other ecclesiastics I have known in various churches—a peace which I have not desired for myself. He died a philosopher on February 20, 1921. I hope that a volume of his letters will be published. They would honour his memory and be very edifying.

From Edenham I went to Storrington to see another of my correspondents, George Tyrrell; then to Brighton to a friend, who introduced me to the sociologist, Mr. Bodley, with whom I had a long conversation on French ecclesiastical affairs. Mr. Bodley is an atheist who believes religion to be necessary for the rank-and-file, and who more especially admires Catholicism. He considered the uniting of the French nation and the Church by the Concordat so essential that he had actually to see the Separation before he would admit its possibility. He has written a book on *The Decay of Idealism in France*. It is owing to his opinions and to his wealth that he has been elected correspondent of the Institut.

On October 19 I recrossed the Channel.

¹ In his book, *Acer in Hostem*, Galton has written pages about Pater which show all he owed him. Pater's saying may be compared to that of Lanfrey: "Resignation is the defeat of the soul." [I have failed to find the above quotations in Pater's published works.—TRANS.]

CHAPTER XXII

THE INJUNCTIONS OF PIUS X

Political Opposition—The Anti-Modernist Oath —The Black Terror.

1907–1909

AFTER an absence of barely two months I returned to my column, "Religious Affairs," in *Le Siècle*.

There was plenty of work, and work of the greatest interest. The crusade organized by Pius X for the triumph of his political and religious injunctions was at its height.

The new bishops, nominated by the Pope, were chosen with the object of checkmating the Separation law and repressing Modernist heresy. A number of bishops, supporters of the Concordat, rallied to them—some through piety, others in the hope of being made archbishops. "The so-called Conservative and Catholic newspapers," as Mgr. Mignot¹ said, "exploited the slightest words of the Pope in favour of their line of political conduct." A great row was expected.

Towards the end of 1907, ambitious people like the Coadjutor of Cambrai (Mgr. Delamaire) and fanatics like Canon Coubé preached civil war. In *Le Siècle*, under the pseudonym of "Paul Chèze," I denounced a seditious speech by the Coadjutor. He denied my accusation, and threatened me with legal proceedings. I maintained what I had said, and he did not prosecute me.² If he had gone to law my informers, Mgr. Lacroix and Père Vincent Maumus, would have confounded him. Under Leo XIII he had actually been liberal; but he aspired to a cardinal's hat—that red hat which for centuries had caused so many to betray their fatherland.

¹ Letter to Père Hyacinthe, November 3, 1907.

² See my *Evêques et Diocèses*, 2nd series, pp. 67–68.

If the Pope's political injunctions had, owing to the wisdom of the French Government, failed to cause serious trouble in France, it was otherwise with his religious injunctions; they triumphed easily, as was inevitable, owing to the centralization of the Catholic Church. Pius X endeavoured to kill any intellectual innovation by establishing "Councils of Vigilance" in every diocese, and by exacting an Anti-Modernist oath from every officiating priest. They all took this oath with the exception of four dozen recalcitrants—four dozen in the whole world.¹ To resist would have involved destitution, starvation, and that prolonged martyrdom which the world ignores and disdains. So the Modernists took the oath. It was a great and a double farce: a farce on their part (they pronounced a formula in which they did not believe), and a farce on the part of the bishops, who knew very well that those who took the oath were pronouncing an empty formula. The farce was so obvious in certain cases that fanatics resolved to end it, and denounced the heretics. The fanatics were joined by the ambitious, who realized that good appointments were likely to fall vacant. The heretic hunt became as successful as it was pious. A pervert from liberalism, Mgr. Umberto Benigni, organized it in a kind of secret society, which continued until 1914, and made its activity felt throughout Europe.² It was a glorification of those *Aa* which, from the seminary upwards, organize delation.

There ensued an immense reaction in the doctrine taught by the clergy. I confine myself to noting that which concerns two questions in which I am particularly interested—those of apostolical succession and Biblical criticism.

In a review of my book, *La Controverse de l'Apostolicité*, which he published in 1903, a Catholic historian, Paul Allard, said: "If M. Houtin has too noisily and sometimes too brutally forced an already open door, at least it will be impossible for him henceforth ever to shut it behind him." In spite of a certain disparagement, this was really an acknow-

¹ See my *Histoire du Modernisme*.

² For the history of this society see a little monthly review published in Paris, *Le Mouvement des Faits et des Idées*; 1923.

ledgment that my book had said the final word. But the worthy Paul Allard was mistaken. The replies that the Canons Blondel (of Sens) and Marbot (of Aix) immediately hurled against me showed that the adherents of ancient tradition did not believe themselves beaten, and teaching in the seminaries continued just as before down to the end of 1907. On September 18 in that year, when investing Cardinal Andrieu, Bishop of Marseilles, with the biretta, Pius X declared that "Marseilles is the port in which not merely the disciple but the friend of the divine Redeemer landed after the sacrifice of Calvary." These words gave the signal for a revival of the teaching of legends. Naturally pious laymen supported it. In a solemn reception at the Archbishop's Palace in Paris, in the beginning of January, 1908, Colonel Keller said to Cardinal Richard: "We abjure none of the glorious traditions of our history. We believe with Pius X that Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, brought the faith to Marseilles; that, at the baptism of Clovis, St. Remy founded Christian France; that St. Michael spoke to Jeanne d'Arc and sent her to deliver France from the English yoke; finally that the Holy Virgin appeared at Lourdes and there worked many miracles."

The reaction continued to increase until, on October 17, 1913, a circular from the court of the Holy Consistory officially prohibited the use in all seminaries of text-books and books of reference which do not conform to theological criteria; and by these were intended not the works of Renan, but books of enlightened piety, especially those of Père Delahaye on *Les Légendes Hagiographiques*. In this anti-critical reaction politicians who wished to win favour with the Pope were naturally prominent. One of the most pronounced of these was a republican prelate, the Archbishop of Rouen, Mgr. Fuzet, of whom his friend, Mgr. Lacroix, told me many times that he did not know whether he believed in God, and added several good stories about him which I may write some day, if I have leisure. Mgr. Fuzet sent the Pope an impudent letter he had written in favour of the apostolic succession of the bishoprics of Provence. The

Cardinal Secretary of State replied to the prelate (on April 22, 1912), pointing out to him the contagious effects of the more or less subtle poison of Modernism, and the more or less disguised venom of hypercriticism. He summoned courageous minds, animated with God's spirit, to unite their efforts against the assertions of rash science, and to raise the cry of alarm against the false wisdom of the century.¹

That which happened in the sphere of Biblical criticism was equally edifying, and had even more serious results.

In 1905, M. Fulcran Vigouroux conceived the idea of making the Pope's Biblical Commission deliver oracular pronouncements, which were to solve certain problems of Catholic exegesis. From 1907 the machine worked more frequently. It promulgated solutions of which it could not be sure, and even, if I have been correctly informed by the Archbishop of Albi, which it knew to be untrue. They wanted to "tighten the bridles," "to wall in criticism." These solutions were forced into seminary teaching. Intelligent students saw that they had no solid foundation. They kicked against the pricks. They were told in the class-room that such was the Church's teaching; they might take it or leave it. But to prevent their quitting the seminary they were assured in the confessional that these questions were unimportant, that the decisions of the Commission had no dogmatical significance, that they were merely disciplinary measures, that they were to be retained in lessons and in sermons simply because authority did not consider it had sufficient reasons for rejecting them.²

From this time, also, directors of seminaries considered positive theology, history, and philosophy as particularly dangerous, and treated them accordingly. They turned the young of contemplative temperament towards mysticism (God making himself felt in the heart), and those who were more energetic towards good works—that is, in the direction

¹ See *Les Questions Actuelles*, vol. cxii, p. 606.

² For the authority of the decisions of the Pope's Biblical Commission see the *Motu proprio Præstantia Scripturæ* of November 18, 1907. This papal document may have put an end to the proceedings I relate here.

of philanthropy and gymnastic societies. From 1875-1907—that is, from the foundation of the Catholic universities to the *Pascendi* encyclical—the priests trained in these universities were animated by an eager intellectual curiosity; they were anxious to reconcile the Church and the age. With the *Pascendi* encyclical the extinguisher fell back heavily on the clergy. These are the causes of the deep curve in the numbers recruited for the clergy shown by statistics from this time. Young men who are passionate seekers after truth leave the Church; there remain the dreamers and the agitators whom truth does not interest, and the unfortunate for whom there is no career save the priesthood.

In the kind of “black terror” which resulted from the intellectual régime enforced by Pius X, Catholics who published reviews or newspapers tainted with liberalism were obliged to suppress them. As these periodicals were disappearing one after the other, Mgr. Lacroix and Mgr. Mignot, in 1908, would have liked me to found one which should continue to appear in spite of condemnations. The principal financier, however, laid down conditions which the publisher felt he could not accept. So I had to content myself with following the course of events from day to day in *Le Siècle*.

In 1908 the management of this newspaper, which was not growing rich on the progress of ideas, had to be confided to a new editor, thoroughly conversant with press matters—M. Henry Bérenger, now Senator of Guadeloupe. He made reductions in the staff from reasons of economy. In July, 1909, I was among those who were dismissed. When telling me that my engagement was at an end, M. Bérenger said, smiling: “The religious question no longer exists in France.” “That is true of the Catholic question, but not of the religious,” I replied. Which of us was right?

I will not describe the various states of mind through which I was passing at this time, but merely indicate their outstanding features. In 1904 I was full of hope in a religious reformation. I thought I beheld great ecclesiastics (in every country) determined to struggle for sincerity, for

the reconciliation of faith and science. I thought I beheld in all the faithful of every country an immense aspiration towards greater light and liberty. In 1909 all these great ecclesiastics had disappeared from my horizon, and in no country did the profound indifference of the public attempt to set any obstacle in the way of the tactics of the Vatican. Only its political vagaries sometimes aroused the attention of the French. The reflections of Tyrrell in a letter he wrote at that time to Père Hyacinthe might well give me food for thought :—

I have slowly come to learn by experience that courage is the rarest of all the virtues, and that it has almost innumerable counterfeits.....Taken as a whole, Modernists are cowards ; but so are all men taken in a mass.....I fear that the courage of isolated individuals is not very efficacious unless it is supported by widely-spread public sympathy.

I took refuge in history, all the more completely because I had undertaken two biographies—one of my friend, the Abbé de Meissas, who died in 1906, the other of Père Hyacinthe Loyson—and because, just at that moment, the latter involved me in a heated controversy, to which I must devote a few pages.

CHAPTER XXIII

A CONTROVERSY WITH LIBERAL CATHOLICS

In the Circle of Charles Perraud—The Oratorians—Mgr. Baudrillart.

1909

IN my book *Autour d'un Prêtre Marié*, published in 1910, and in the third volume of *La vie du Père Hyacinthe*, which appeared in 1923, I have told how I was brought to publish in October, 1908, a notice on a friend of Père Hyacinthe, the Abbé Charles Perraud, younger brother of the Cardinal Bishop of Autun, and an Academician. I also gave my opinions of the unfortunate Charles. All I will say here is that he was a noble, generous priest, full of devoutness, full of faith, and one who never ceased to believe in the divine mission of the Church. Like many good priests, he suffered much; theological discussions did not interest him, and the law of ecclesiastical celibacy became an intolerable burden. He arranged to live without scandal with a friend of his youth, who was free to dispose of herself, being childless and a widow.

Those who knew Charles Perraud intimately were never under any illusion as to his relations with his housekeeper. The old and the leading Fathers of the Oratory into which he had been received as a priest in his youth knew it. When my book was on the point of appearing, two of their most distinguished fathers—le Père Lecanuet and le Père Laberthonnière—wanted to persuade Père Hyacinthe not to let my work see the light. They did not question my veracity any more than the two bishops, Mgr. Villard and Mgr. Gauthey, who also tried by various means to prevent the book from appearing.

Even when *La Croix* was trying to injure my work it

could not help—with more sincerity than expedience—admitting in the following terms that it was true: “All the newspapers are writing about the revelations made by an apostate priest of the errors and weaknesses which were a sad stain on the life of Cardinal Perraud’s brother.”

A few months later—that is, in May, 1909—the Oratorians issued a pamphlet which claimed to refute my story. It represented Père Hyacinthe as a forger, and me as a calumniator.

The pamphlet, worthily honoured with a preface by the Bishop of Nice, Mgr. Henri Chapon, found its chief introducer and advocate in Mgr. Alfred Baudrillart, Rector of l’Institut Catholique de Paris, who wrote of it in *L’Univers* and *Le Bulletin de la Semaine*. Thus the new organ of intransigent Catholicism and the new organ of liberal Catholics were in accord.

I have not space here to write of Mgr. Chapon. Concerning him, while waiting for something better, my *Autour* may be consulted.

The good Père Hyacinthe, surprised and grieved to find Mgr. Baudrillart supporting so bad a cause, was so simple as to write him a private letter. The prelate replied by return, on May 29, implicitly recognizing the truth of my story,¹ though in public he continued to maintain the contrary.

The worthy prelate, in the course of his argument, had somewhat ill treated me. I thought it my duty as well as my right to reply. We entered into a controversy. I had the pleasure of forcing my adversary to make successive concessions: it was not a love affair—a little neurasthenia; the woman had been his mother’s servant—he could not but love her as a woman; admit that he loved her—yes, they cohabited; there must have been something—but you will never prove, and I defy you to prove, that they partook of the forbidden fruit! From this his last trench the Rector was not to be driven.

From the beginning he tried to argue from analogy. “If

¹ Letter published in *Le Père Hyacinthe*, vol. iii, p. 160.

it pleased me," he wrote,¹ "to declare to-day that M. Houtin has guilty relations with some one in his service, how could M. Houtin prove the contrary?" "If Monseigneur," I replied,² "made the declaration to which he refers, he would simply confirm the reputation for rashness which he wishes to acquire by this impossible controversy. It would be very easy for me to show that I have not and have never had a woman in my service, not even any servant old or young, or a charwoman."

Mgr. Baudrillart retorted :—

M. Houtin, it appears, lives with his mother.....Many other priests besides him depend for service on a mother or a sister.³ He has wit enough to understand that the analogy I assumed had no object save to recall to him that there are accusations which are easy to make but very difficult to disprove, according to a famous saying which M. Houtin knows as well as I do : "How, Sir, can you contrive to be so sure of such things?"

Yes, Sir, we are right in protesting, because we have known, personally, the men of whom you write, and because you know them merely through documents, which are obscure and incomplete, and which, like all documents, may be made to say anything. We have known these men personally, and we know them to have been incapable of certain acts and certain farces which you now impute to them, because you have found yourself compelled to relinquish your original position, that of a priest, pious, loyal—and married.

I replied⁴ :—

It is certainly not as clear as the style of l'Ecole Normale. But, grammatically, it can have only one meaning ; and, as I am absolutely obliged to believe that the eminent rector knows grammar, I am, in spite of the sufficient dose of wit which he is kind enough to attribute to me, forced to recognize that I am proclaimed "married"—monogamous, I trust—and without "guilty relations with the person who is in my service." Really, Monseigneur, in order to put the finishing touch to my discomfiture, are you going to publish a pamphlet entitled *Un Prêtre Marié, Albert Houtin* ? It would interest me so much that I ask you not to delay your explanation of the true meaning of that phrase.

¹ *L'Univers*, June 4, 1909. See *Autour*, p. 187.

² *L'Univers*, July 2, 1909. See *Autour*, pp. 196–8.

³ Whatever Mgr. Baudrillart may say, his delicate expression does not apply to my case. I always helped my parents to keep up our modest home. They never waited upon me. It was on account of my father's illness, in 1914, that we began to employ a charwoman.

⁴ *L'Univers*, July 14, 1909. See *Autour*, p. 201.

Obliged for once to give a categorical explanation, Mgr. Baudrillart replied as follows¹ :—

M. Houtin takes advantage, very wittily I admit, of a printer's error. *L'Univers* printed *de* instead of *du*. I had written that M. Houtin, referring to Charles Perraud, had been driven to abandon the first position he had taken up : that of priest [*celle du prêtre*]. Put "argument" instead of "position," it will be clearer, I agree.

I was not surprised at the outburst of the eminent prelate. It is in the orthodox tradition ; and an eye-witness told me that some time previously, dining at the presbytery of Saint Sulpice, he had indulged in similar remarks concerning me.

The prelate who engaged in this kind of controversy had entered my home. One evening in November, 1906, he had come to my house with letters written to Père Hyacinthe by Mgr. Hulst, whose Life he was editing. He had seen my dear mother bring in the lamp, by the light of which we were to read our documents. He need not have written about "a woman" in my service.

As one of Père Hyacinthe's papers bore on the question of Biblical criticism, Mgr. Baudrillart spoke to me on the subject. He was greatly perturbed. He asked my opinion, as priest to priest, on the serious attitude taken by the Church in this matter. I had not concealed from him my way of thinking, which, moreover, appeared in my published works. In a malicious and pointed manner he repeated during the controversy that he knew what opinions I held. They had never been secret. I refrained from reminding him how agitated he had been.

All these polemics interested me intensely. I was curious to meet the Oratorians on the solid ground of history. The works of people like Lescœur,² Largent,³ Nouvelle,⁴ and Alfred

¹ *L'Univers*, July 14. Cf. *Autour*, p. 207.

² Père Lescœur had published a score of volumes which are hardly more than false pleadings for the supernatural and against "the revolutionary spirit," "lay mentality," "the State, schoolmaster and father of a family," "the State, mother of a family," etc.

³ Author of a mediocre book on St. Jerome.

⁴ Author of a poor appeal entitled *L'Authenticité du Quatrième Evangile et la Thèse de M. Loisy*.

Baudrillart¹ had always seemed to me false pleadings. I felt some satisfaction in getting to know their authors personally and in studying their methods of procedure. These methods conformed to those of Catholic apologetics, so well described by Archbishop Darboy in this formula: "You are not asked to be right, but to appear to be right"; and by Archbishop Meignan: "We are the advocates of tradition."

When my adversaries were beaten they took their revenge by repeating what most of the orthodox say of those who annoy them²—namely, that I was paid to maintain certain opinions.³ An eminent ecclesiastic, intimate with the people of *Le Bulletin de la Semaine*, wrote to me as early as August 18, 1909, when I had obviously crushed my contradictors: "It is evident that the whole of this campaign has been carried on in defiance of common sense, and it is odious to see history given the lie to by those who know it to be true. After all, it will be a lesson in candour, though one dearly bought. But why, with your unimpeachable knowledge, do you not put the Assumptionists on their trial? It seems to me that their history, from the beginning of *Le Pèlerin*, simply told, with discreet irony, would strike them a terrible blow," etc.

This advice was the sequel to that which I had been receiving for five years to turn my activities against Jews, Protestants, and Freemasons.⁴ I was not for a moment tempted to follow it. In what way in my sad experience and against my sorry person have the Assumptionists behaved worse than the Oratorians? In what way have intransigent

¹ See especially his weak book, *L'Eglise Catholique, la Renaissance, le Protestantisme*. Since then Mgr. B. has constituted himself the maintainer of Littré's conversion and the advocate of the decision of Pius X in the separation affair. Is it necessary to recall that Mgr. Baudrillart has twice won the great literary Gobert prize?

² For example, in the New York *Freeman's Journal* for October 10, 1903, we read: "The French correspondent of an Irish paper says that a letter has been published in which the apostate Renan is stated to have told an old college friend that he attacked religion because it paid to do so. Doubtless it is for the same reason that the apostate Combes is engaged in the same evil work."

³ ".....those who circulate the stupidly calumnious rumour that M. Houtin has been paid by a certain committee in order to destroy the reputation of Charles Perraud" (letter from Mgr. Mignot to Père Hyacinthe, Feb. 5, 1910).

⁴ See above, chap. xiii, p. 155.

and fanatical Catholics behaved worse than liberal or enlightened Catholics?

Had I not found in one and the other the same esprit de corps and the same method of procedure? And can it be otherwise? Is not religious passion as blinding as any other? That "which is before and above everything a school of sincerity and humility" is science.

"Science, indeed, teaches us to submit our reason to the test of truth, to know and to judge things as they are ; that is to say, as they will be, and not as we wish them to be. Science is the most complete school of resignation and humility, since it teaches us to bow before the apparently meanest fact."¹

"He alone is sure of never speaking an untruth to his fellows who in the silence of scientific meditation has felt the impossibility of being untrue to himself."²

¹ Miguel Unamuno, *Del Sentimiento Trágico de La Vida* (1917), p. 240.

² Léon Brunschvicg, *Nature et Liberté*, p. 121.

CHAPTER XXIV

MY THIRD INVENTORY

Modernism, Religious Reform, a Substitute for Myths—*Sacerdos in æternum*.

1910–1912

ON September 23, 1910, one of my English correspondents, the Rev. Alfred Fawkes, wrote to me that he had undertaken to write a History of Modernism, and he asked me to put my memory and my papers at his disposal. Desiring to render him a service, I classified and arranged my documents; and this I did so well that I found I had myself all unconsciously written a book like the one he had in mind.¹ I began to send it to press in January, 1912, and by November in that year it was on sale. As for Mr. Fawkes, he considered that, after my account, there remained nothing for him to say.²

At the same time I was finishing my biography of Père Hyacinthe Loyson. The study of the reforms he attempted in Catholicism and the study of the reforms outlined by the Modernists gave me ample material for reflection on the parts played by different religions in society, on the right and the duty of their clergy to remain in them, and finally on the course a religious man should take in the crisis at which all civilized people have now arrived through the loss of their traditional beliefs. I was thus brought to take a "new inventory of my convictions," according to the expression

¹ I have said this in my *Histoire du Modernisme*, p. v.

² He wrote to me on November 29, 1913: "It was Bodley who wanted me to write a history of the movement, but I felt that I had not the necessary knowledge, and when your excellent history came out I was able to say with truth that the work had been done." Instead of the book he had planned and announced, Mr. Fawkes published a collection of the chief articles he had contributed to different magazines from 1902 till 1912, and gave it the title of *Studies in Modernism* (London, November, 1913).

I had used when writing to my bishop twelve years earlier.¹ Since that letter, memorable in my little history, I had never ceased meticulously to examine the foundation and the condition of my beliefs. In 1904² I had found myself "a Christian Theist" or "a Catholic Theist." In the years that followed, the intransigence of the papacy had convinced me that the religion of the future would never evolve naturally³ out of Catholicism, but that there must be some sudden change, some abrupt break. Thus I had gradually become detached from Catholicism. If in 1907 a fortune had fallen to me, I should have used it to preach Theism by founding a Theistic chapel, by trying to introduce into my country certain religious forms I had seen in America in those Unitarian churches which were the most free from Christian survivals. My most recent investigations had led me to the conclusion that it is wrong to attempt to modernize Christianity. It is no more a divine revelation than any other positive religion. Like all the others, it is for the most part founded on fraud. An attempt to give it a new foundation or new title-deeds is an enterprise as vain as it is fantastic.

Sometimes, while looking through my cards relating to the frauds committed in the history of Christian Churches, and while meditating on the insincerity (worthy of their predecessors) which I had observed among a number of their representatives with whom I had come in contact, I asked myself whether religion is anything but a mystification, sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious—a humbug, as the English say—or an exploiting of a survival which will soon be as out of date as magic.

And when I reconsidered the interpretations to which Modernists had resorted in order to replace outworn myths

¹ See *ante*, p. 131.

² See *ante*, chap. xv, p. 190.

³ My conclusions on this point resembled those of Marcel Hébert. He wrote to me on March 23, 1906, on the occasion of the appearance of Tyrrell's *Letter to a Professor of Anthropology*: "That the religious forms of the future should evolve out of the Catholic Church is a fine opinion which I once held. But it is merely an opinion.....and a very improbable hypothesis." At the end of his life Tyrrell did not even believe what Hébert believed—that there will be any religion in the future.

and to reinterpret their formulæ, I asked myself whether Frazer was not right when he wrote: "The history of religion is one long effort to reconcile an ancient custom with a new idea, to find a reasonable theory to explain an absurd practice."¹ I recalled the words of an Agnostic pastor some time before: "Of all exploitations the easiest and the most honourable is that of the religious sentiment." And when I looked back over my own evolution, when I saw how my opponents had carried me by degrees from the legend of St. René to the consideration of the essential dogmas of Christianity, I exclaimed with Pascal: "The miserable creatures, who compelled me to speak of the fundamentals of religion!"

Such ideas forced me to break away entirely from all ecclesiastical organizations. I still wore the cassock. In spite of the irregularity of my situation, neither my bishop nor the Archbishop of Paris had hitherto commanded me to discard it. I had kept it as the old uniform of idealism. I should have thought it wrong to abandon it at a time when Materialism flourished, and when I was hoping for a religious revival or transformation. It seemed to me a sign of transition, and, so to speak, of authority, for future spiritual activity.² After all, this cassock did not cost the Church a halfpenny, and it could not deceive any one. Dogmatic newspapers hardly ever missed an opportunity of treating me as an apostate or as an unfrocked priest.³ Their readers

¹ *The Golden Bough, Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, vol. ii (1912), p. 40.

² I referred to these ideas in my *Crise du Clergé* (article in *Le Siècle*, January 23, 1905), chapter "Ceux qui Restent," p. 69: "Let us notice, in order to be complete, those who are still in the Church at present, though they are determined to leave it some day, when the right moment occurs, when the religious crisis through which France is now passing is over.....Such are certain priests, in spite of the many inconveniences of their false position.....They merely retain their ecclesiastical dress to show that the object of their life is not in this world, and that they remain faithful to the ideal." All those who knew me guessed that in this passage I was referring to myself. In *L'Univers* of June 4, 1909, Mgr. Baudrillart asked "why I persisted in wearing the habit of a Catholic priest." I replied: "The question is indiscreet. It concerns only Our Sovereign Pontiff the Pope and my bishop. Mgr. the Rector considers doubtless that their vigilance is at fault as far as I am concerned."

³ See *ante*, chap. xxiii, p. 251, quotation from *La Croix*, and chap. xiv, p. 178, quotation from M. Maigren.

were consequently on their guard against me and my writings. Those liberal Catholics whom the question concerned knew that I had not retracted my books which had been put on the *Index*, and that I should never disown them. When my opinions no longer permitted me to wear the ecclesiastical habit I discarded it. This occurred on April 24, 1912.

As nine years had elapsed since my bishop had shown any interest in my fate, I thought it useless to inform him of this change of costume. I considered it equally needless to inform the public, and to show them my spiritual balance-sheet. My personality was not so important as to render such a revelation urgent. Nevertheless, I thought it fitting to indicate discreetly the result of my evolution in the foreword of my *Histoire du Modernisme*, which was to appear six months later. I did so in these terms :—

By about 1900, as I have already related, my faith, after successive and continuous readjustments, had suffered a transformation.¹ In December, 1903, the ecclesiastical authority, by putting two of my works on the *Index*,² showed that it did not approve of these adaptations. I did not continue to make them. What was the good? My studies were leading me—slowly, it is true—to the certitude that there does not exist, and that there never has been, a specially revealed religion.

Thus I returned to the ranks—that is to say, to ordinary life. Thus for the Catholic Church I became, and I shall remain, an “apostate,” as *La Croix* says;³ a “renegade from Catholicism and the priesthood,” in the words of M. Fernand Mourret of Saint Sulpice.⁴

¹ *Mes Difficultés avec mon Evêque* (1903), p. 19.

² See *ante*, chap. xiv, p. 181.

³ See *ante*, chap. xxiii, p. 251.

⁴ “Revue Apologétique,” October 15, 1922, p. 83. M. Mourret, who treats me so impolitely, has made great use of my *Histoire du Modernisme*, sometimes without acknowledgment. A collaborator in a big publishing enterprise wrote to me recently (on April 13, 1925) that one of my books would be “of great assistance” to him in a work for which he had just been asked, and, he added: “You must not be mentioned. They are afraid of you.” For more than twenty years I have been accustomed to see myself robbed by good folk who never quote me unless it is to insult me. As I have always worked in order to be useful and not to be praised, I am satisfied. I should be happy if, with the help of my poor writings, some little common sense were introduced into a Church I have dearly loved. But I fear—to use the words of Duchesne—that “the abbés who try to push criticism through the bars of the cage” are merely wasting their time, as I have wasted mine.

And for many of my compatriots—one hundred and twenty-four years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen—I was nothing else.

A sensible man, true to the principles of the Revolution, and who was anxious about my future, tried to interest in it a very high personage of the University, a so-called free-thinker. The latter replied to him: "The clergy are an élite; those who leave their ranks are deserters."

And an illustrious unbeliever—one of those who are willing to believe that "the Catholic reformation" will take place within the Church—seeing me in lay dress, said to me severely, as if he admitted the Church's doctrine of the sacraments: *Tu es sacerdos in æternum.*

Was he wrong?

"He who has once intelligently pronounced the words 'self renunciation,' 'invisible guide,' 'power of evil,' etc.—that man is enlisted for ever in the service of the super-human."¹

Was he right?

"It is not necessary to be a believer, as the new fanatics of all dogmatism insolently affirm, but it is necessary to be sincere; that is the first requirement for a moral being. The doubts of an honest man contain more moral truth than the confessions of faith of those who bear the yoke of convention."²

"Man belongs neither to his language nor to his race; he belongs to himself alone; for he is a free being—that is, a moral being."³

¹ R. W. Emerson, *Autobiographie d' après son Journal intime* (Paris: Colin, 1914), i, p. 174.

² Ximénès Doudan, *Pensées et Fragments*, p. 70, reproduced in his published works in the *Bibliothèque Romantique* (1924), p. xciii.

³ Renan, *Discours et Conférences*, preface, p. iii.

INDEX

ACHET, 23, 24, 49, 54, 55
 Agliardi, Cardinal, 167 *n.*
 Allard, Paul, 245
 Allier, R., 174, 203 *n.*
 Alphonsus of Liguori, S.,
 48-9, 52
 Amette, Cardinal, 28
 André, Tony, 240
 Andrieu, Cardinal, 246
 Angebault, Mgr., 106
 Anjou, 1, 106, 112 *n.* 1,
 121 *n.* 1, 128
 Archanauld, 123
 Aubry, J. B., 139
 Aulard, 214
Autorité, L', 104
Avènement, L', 232, 233
 Aventino, 226 *n.* 2
 BAKER, B. A., 205
 Balzani, 204 and *n.* 1
 Baron, F., 22, 50, 55, 65,
 70, 79, 134, 136
 Baron, Mgr., 99, 104
 and *n.*
 Barthélemy, Ch., 185
 Battifol, Mgr., 152, 173,
 187, 214, 221 *n.*
 Baudrillart, Mgr., 72 *n.*,
 98, 251-3, 258 *n.* 2
 Baudriller, 114
 Bazin, René, 10, 99, 111-
 12 and *n.* 1
 Bellanger, Auguste, 89
 Bellay, Joachim du, 1
 Benedictine Monks of
 Solesmes, 12, 13, 27-9,
 106, 230
 Benedictine Nuns of
 Solesmes, 30, 83-6,
 108, 109
 Benigni, Mgr., 245
 Benedict XV, 133 *n.* 2,
 205, 206, 215 *n.* 2
 Bérenger, Henry, 248
 Bernier, Henry, 44 *n.* 1,
 106, 117, 136
 Bertrand, L. A., 58
 Bérulle, Cardinal, 44
 Besnard, F. Y., 58 *n.* 1

Besse, Dom, 110 *n.* 4
 Blennerhasset, 184
 Blondel, of Sens, 246
 Bodin, J. F., 113
 Bodinier, G., 112
 Bodley, J. E. C., 243,
 256 *n.* 2
 Boisandré, 198 *n.* 2
 Bojani, 205 and *n.* 4,
 207-8
 Bonal, 47
 Bonet-Maury, 237, 240,
 242
 Bonnetty, Augustin, 19
 Borghese, Prince Gio-
 vanni, 205, 207
 Bossuet, 186, 187, 191,
 197
 Boudon, 95 *n.*
 Bourigaud, Dom, 85
 Bourret, Cardinal, 184
 Bourrier, A., 174
 Brémond, H., 95 *n.*, 97,
 98 *ns.* 1 and 2
 Briand, Aristide, 220,
 226, 232, 233, 234 *n.* 3
 Bricout, 173
 Brillant, Maurice, 17 *n.* 1,
 135
 Brisson, 203 *n.*
 Brücker, J., 58 *n.* 1
 Brugère, 22 *n.* 2
 Brunetière, Ferdinand,
 223 *n.* 3, 227 and *n.*
 Brunschvicg, Léon, 255
n. 2
 Buisson, F., 226
Bulletin Critique d'His-
toire, 73
Bulletin de la Semaine,
 251, 254
Bulletin de Littérature
Ecclésiastique, 152 *n.* 3
Bulletin de Saint-Martin
et de Saint-Benoît, 74
n. 1
 Butruille, Dom P., 52
n. 2
 — Dom M., 52 *n.* 3

CABROL, Dom, 69, 74 *n.* 1,
 84, 86, 89, 92, 98, 106
 Canonico, T., 204
 Cara, Di, 204
 Carry, F., 175, 205, 208
 Casciola, Brizio, 171
Censeur, Le, 237 *n.*
 Ceretti, Mgr., 233 *n.* 1
 Chabert, 100
 Chalmers, 215 *n.* 1
 Chamard, Dom, 45 *n.*,
 87 and *n.* 1, 112, 136,
 163 *n.* 1, 185
 Chambord, Comte de, 5,
 12
 Chapon, Mgr., 251
 Charbonnel, V., 174
 Charriau, 203 *n.* 1
 Charrier, Abbé, 32 *n.* 4
 Chateaubriand, 210
 Chaumet, J., 58 *n.* 3
 Chauvin, Father Paul,
 52 *n.* 3
 — Dom Jacques, 52
n. 2
 Chévreuse, Duchess of,
 12
Chrétien Français, Le,
 175 *n.* 2
Chronique de la Bonne
Presse, 175 *n.* 2
 Chiesa, Della, Mgr., 205
 Cicero, 57
Civiltà Cattolica, La, 225
 Clain, Arthur, 141
 Clemenceau, Georges,
 221 *n.*, 226, 231, 232,
 233
 Clément, Mgr., 161
 Clifford, Mgr., 73
 Cloutz, A., 205
 Cochin, Denys, 219
 Coëtlosquet, Dom J. du,
 32 *ns.* 3 and 4
 Combes, 61, 254 *n.* 2
 Compain, Mme., 189 *n.* 2
 Congreve, Father G., 95
 Cornély, 198
Correspondant, Le, 218,
 221 *n.* 1, 223 *n.* 2

- Corriere della Sera, Il*, 175, 213 n.
 Cot 234 n. 3
 Coubé, 244
 Coutolleau, 146
 Couturat, 191 n. 3
 Couturier, Dom Charles, 12, 28, 30 n., 33 n. 2, 35, 36 and n. 1, 37, 38, 39, 43, 58, 69, 106, 108, 109, 110
 Cowley Fathers, the, 95
Croix, La, 24 n. 2, 207 n. 1, 219 and n. 1, 232, 239 n., 250, 259
 Crosnier, A., 48 n. 2, 111
 Cunisset, Carnot, 197
 Curci, 206
 Cuvier, 125
 Cyr, 219

 DABRY, 158 and n. 1, 163, 173
 Darboy, 254
 Darras, 185
 Darwin, 75
 Dauge, 112
 Debidour, 208 n.
 Delacroix, H., 189 n. 1
 Delahaye, Abbé J. M., 99 n. 2
 — Jules, 228
 Delamaire, Mgr., 244
 Delatte, Dom, 35, 39, 46 n. 1, 69, 71, 84, 86, 87, 109
 Delattre, 213, 215
 Delehaye, 246
 Dell, Robert, 230 n. 1
 Delpech, Dom, 52 n. 4
 Deluc, 125
Demain, 213 n.
 Démaret, Dom, 32 n. 2
 Denis, Abbé Ch., 173
Dépêche de Toulouse, La, 214
 Descartes, 22
 Dissard, 195
 Döllinger, 204, 239
 Doudan, Ximénès, 260 n. 2
 Domic, René, 10
 Dozy, 74
 Dreyfus Affair, 127
 Driscoll, 141, 142, 143, 145
 Drumont, 85
 Duchesne, Mgr. L., 50 n., 61 n., 98, 113, 115, 163, 167 n. 2, 187, 200 n. 3, 204, 207, 259 n. 4
 Dubois, Marcel, 101
 Dubief, 204
 Dugas, L., 183
 Duilhé de Saint-Projet, 56
 Dulot, Charles, 219
 Dumont, Abbé, 196
 Dupanloup, 184, 232, 239
 Durand-Morimbau, 232-3

Eclair, L', 175 n. 2
Éducation, L', 183
 Eichthal, A. d', 204
 Eliot, Ch. W., 241 and n. 1
 Elizabeth, Mme., 8
 Emerson, R. W., 238, 260 n. 1
 Emmerich, Catherine, 44
 Ermoni, V., 158 n. 1, 163
 Espinay, G. d', 111
 Esser, 169, 182, 208
Études, Les, 58 n. 1

 FABER, William, 20
 Faguet, 100
 Falloux, 106
 Farcy, 111
 Farges, Mgr., 72 n.
 Farnborough, 90
 Fauchaux, René, 13 n. 4
 Fawkes, A., 256 and n. 2
 Faye, 72
 Féron-Vraw, 219
 Férotin, Dom, 74
Figaro, Le, 175 n. 2, 217, 222 n. 1, 223 n. 3
 Flinois, Dom, 52 n. 3
 Fontaine, 212 and n. 2
 Fontenau, Dom, 130 n. 2, 168, 184
 Fouillée, A., 22
France Catholique, La, 231
France et Évangile, 231 n. 1
 Franchetti, L., 204 and n. 2
 Franqueville, Comtesse de, 230 n. 1
 Frazer, Sir J. G., 258 and n. 1
 Frémont, G., 56
 Freppel, Mgr., 8, 28, 70, 81, 103, 104 n., 184
 Freslon, 106
 Fromage, Dom, 44, 106
 Froment, L., 52 n. 4
 Fuzet, Mgr., 139

 GAFFRE, 231
 Galileo, 142
 Galton, Arthur, 242, 243 and n.
 Gasquet, Cardinal, 230 n. 1
 Gaugain, Dom Léopold, 12-14, 27, 65-6, 71, 127
 Gauthey, Mgr., 250
 — Dom, 84, 108-9, 147
 Gayraud, 220
Gazette de France, La, 228, 229, 232 n. 1
 Geay, Mgr., 194 n. 1, 195, 200 n. 2, 201, 202
 Genocchi, 167 n. 2, 204, 213, 214, 215 and n. 1
 Ghinoni, 204
 Gibbons, Cardinal James, 56
 Gigot, 141 and n. 3, 142, 145
 Gilles-Deperrière, 111
Giornale d'Italia, 203, 212 n. 3
 Godard-Faultrier, 113
 Godet, 196
 Gontier, Paul, 52
 Gordon, G. A., 240
 Goupil, J. B., 58, 99-100, 134
 Goux, Mgr., 152 and n. 4
 Gratry, 56, 110
 Graux, Dom, 52 n. 2
 Grellier, Mgr., 117
 Grimault, 19 n. 1, 23 n. 1, 116
 Griselle, 98
 Grosjean, Abbé, 158 n. 2
 Guépin, Dom, 67 and n. 1, 68, 70, 71, 107, 118
 Guéranger, Dom, 30, 34, 94, 106, 134, 234
 Guilloreau, Dom, 106
 Guthlin, 204

 HALE, E. E., 241 and n. 2
 Hansel, Ch., 139 n. 1
 Hébert, Marcel, 5 n., 18 n. 2, 22 n. 2, 28 n. 1, 61 n., 108, 156-7, 170 n., 171 n. 1, 173, 174 n. 2, 225 n., 257 n. 3
 — Father, T. A., 23 and n. 2
 Hébrard, A., 217, 219

- Hébrard de Villeneuve, 234 *n.* 3
Hérissé, 32 *n.* 3
Hetzenhauer, 213, 214
Hiret, 112
Hogan, John, 61 *n.*
Houbart, B., 19, 20, 22, 29, 51, 52, 56, 65
Houtin, Julian, 2-8, 28, 117, 165
— Juliette, 2, 40 *n.*, 90
— Léonline, 2-5, 7, 8, 28, 40, 71, 132, 165, 186, 252 and *n.* 3, 253
— Marius, 2, 4, 118, 132, 150
Houx, Des, 232 and *ns.* 1 and 2, 233, 234
Hulst, Mgr. d', 253
Huysmans, J. K., 110 *n.* 2, 140
Hy, Felix, 111
Hyacinthe Loyson, 18 *n.* 2, 83 and *n.* 2, 110, 130 *n.* 2, 158 *n.* 1, 173 *n.* 3, 190 *n.*, 203, 206 and *n.*, 211, 215 *n.* 1, 220 *n.* 1, 222 *n.*, 226, 234, 236, 249, 256
ICARD, 50
Ireland, J., 187 *n.* 2
Indépendant, L', 175 *n.* 2
Isoard, Mgr., 103
Italia Réale, L', 159 *n.* 2
Italie, L', 213 *n.*
Ivry, Le Baron d', 218
JAMES, W., 207 *n.*
Jamin, 117
Janssens, Dom, 167 *n.* 2
Jeanne d' Arc, 196, 197 *n.* 1
Jesuit, 19, 42, 217 *n.*
Jesuits, 96
Journal des Débats, Le, 218
Journal of Theological Studies, 74 *n.* 1
Juttet, 204, 211
KAHN, M., 237 *n.* 1
Keller, Colonel, 246
Kersablec, Y. de, 104 *n.*
Klein, E., 142
Kraus, F. X., 204
LABERTHONNIÈRE, L., 250
Lac, Du, 217 and *n.*
Lacordaire, 13, 239
La Croix, C. de, 128
Lacroix, Mgr., 173, 176, 193, 198, 199, 200, 201, 203, 209, 215, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221 and *n.*, 222 *n.*, 224, 226, 228, 229, 230, 244, 246, 248
— Lucien, 196
Labonne, 159
Lahitton, 18 *n.* 1
Lai, Cardinal de, 92
Lamartine, 150
Lambert, E., 32 *n.* 3
— J. B., 32 *n.* 2
Lamprière, Abbé, 111
Landrist, Mgr., 193
Lanessan, 198, 203 *n.*
Largent, 253 *n.* 3
Laroche, M., 23 *n.* 1, 48 and *n.* 2, 52
Lavigerie, Cardinal, 103
Lavino, W., 230 and *n.* 1
Le Bailly, 49, 55, 56
Leblanc, 150, 152, 153
Lecamus, Mgr., 48
Lecanuët, 47, 48 *n.* 1, 250
Leclercq, Dom, 92
Lecot, Cardinal, 222 *n.*
Ledoyen, André, 23 *n.* 1, 73, 78, 79, 80, 81, 88, 89, 90, 92, 99, 105, 106
Ledrain, E., 175 *n.* 2
Lefèvre, Pierre, 80, 81
Lega, Cardinal, 167 *n.* 2
Legeay, Dom, 106, 107
Lejay, Paul, 98, 99 *n.* 1, 146, 187
Lemaître, Jules, 121
Lemire, 219
Le Nordez, Mgr., 195, 196, 197 and *n.* 2, 198 and *n.* 1
Lenormant, F., 73
Leo XIII, 19 *n.* 3, 23, 44, 49, 54, 84, 85, 86, 98, 103, 109, 110 *n.* 4, 128, 145, 162, 169, 177, 195, 202, 235 *n.*, 244
Lepidi, 167 *n.* 2, 169
Lexœur, 253 *n.* 2
Letourneau, G., 17 *n.*, 18 *n.* 1, 22, 26, 48, 52, 53, 56, 65, 70, 96, 129, 136, 139, 143, 145, 151, 167
Libre Parole, La, 85, 104 *n.*, 198
Logerot, Dom, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 47, 69, 107
Loisy, 75, 99 *n.* 1, 137, 138, 139, 142, 146, 151, 157 *n.* 1, 158, 160, 161, 167, 169, 173, 174, 180, 181, 187, 197 *n.* 2, 213, 220
Lope y Moral, 72
Loudière, Abbé, 134 *n.* 1
Louis XVI, 8
Lovatelli, Contessa Ersilia, 205
Loyson. *See* Hyacinthe
Lucas, Abbé, 35 *n.*
Luçon, Cardinal, 10
Luther, 219
Luzzati, Luigi, 205
McCABE, J., 94 and *n.* 1
Macchi, 207
Mahomet, xix
Madrid, 74
Maignen, Ch., 152, 169, 178, 179
Maine, 1
Maisonnette, Dr., 112, 114, 117, 118, 119 and *n.*, 120
Malebranche, 48, 191
Marais, Dom, 46 and *n.* 1, 161 *n.* 2
Marbot, 246
Marchand, Ch., 99, 111
Margival, 169 *n.*
Marie d'Agréda, 44
Marion, 24, 50
Marsille, Dom, 102, 107
Masaryk, 241 and *n.* 3
Masquelier, 219
Massebian, 189
Massillon, 20
Mathieu, Cardinal, 88, 91, 99, 104 and *n.*, 167 *n.* 2, 208, 209
Matin, Le, 84, 85, 219 and *n.* 1, 224, 232
Maulbon d'Arbaumont, L., 43 *n.* 1
Maurus, Vincent, 244
Meignan, Cardinal, 254
Meillon, F., 232, 233, 234
Meissas, 158 *n.* 1, 161, 163 and *n.* 3, 249
Meister, Henri, 168
Melegari, Signorina D., 205
Mellet, Dom, 32 *n.* 2
Menault, Dom, 147 *n.* 2
Ménégoz, E., 189
Merry del Val, 219, 229, 247

- Mignot, 22 *n.* 2, 173,
 220 *n.* 1, 235 *n.*, 237 *n.*,
 244, 248, 254 *n.* 3
 Mondeville, Dom, 67
n. 2
 Mongazon, College, 10,
 13, 71, 77-135, 240
 Monier, 142
 Montagnini, 219, 229
 Montalembert, 13, 35,
 184, 239
 Montesquieu, 100
 Montet, 211 *n.*
 Morel, Jules, 55 and *n.*,
 106
 Moulton, 168
 Mourret, F., 19 *n.* 2,
 259 *n.* 4
*Mouvement, Le, Des Faits
 et Des Idées*, 245 *n.* 2
 Mugnier, Arthur, 196
 Mun, Albert de, 222, 223
 Musset, Alfred de, 13
n. 4

 NARJON, Julien de, 222
n., 231
 Naudet, Abbé P., 173
 Newman, Cardinal, 56,
 73, 93, 96 and *n.*, 97,
 98 and *n.*, 127, 184
 New York *Freeman's*
Journal, 254 *n.* 2
 Nourry, Emile, 224
 Nouvelle, 253 and *n.* 4

 ODESCALCHI, 204
 Olier, J. J., 47
 Olivier, Canon L., 13
n. 4
 Olivieri, Dom, 230 *n.* 1
 Ollive, 21 and *n.* 1, 50
 Oratorians, 39, 251, 253,
 254
Osservatore Romano, 214,
 225
 Ossip-Lourie, 129, 130
 Ozanam, 184

Pages Libres, 237 *n.* 1
 Pagis, Mgr., 196, 200
n. 2
 Palmer, Lady Sophia,
 Comtesse de Franque-
 ville, 230 *n.* 1
 Pascal, 130, 191, 258
 Pasquier, Mgr., 146 *n.* 2
 Pater, Walter, 242, 243
 and *n.*

Patriote de l'Ouest Le,
 175 *n.* 2
 Paulhan, 130
 Pavie, E., 111
 Payot, J., 171
 Pécaut, Félix, 190
 Pélacon, Mgr. de, 229
 Pelletier, Mère Euphra-
 sie, 103
 Peries, Mgr., 169 and
n. 1
 Perraud, Cardinal, 158,
 250
 — Charles, 56, 250-3
 Perreyve, Abbé, 56
 Petit, Mgr. F., 222
Petit Courrier, Le, 175
n. 2
 Petitpierre, 168
 Petre, Miss, 167 *n.* 2
 Petzoldt, G. von, 237,
 238
 Peupotier, 143
 Pius IX, 5, 207 *n.*
 — X, 92, 107, 110 *n.* 4,
 181, 182, 194, 198, 201,
 203, 208, 209, 215, 216,
 220 and *n.* 1, 221, 223,
 225 *n.*, 227, 228, 230,
 235, 237, 244, 245, 246,
 247, 248
 — XI, 133 *n.* 2, 215 *n.* 2
 Pie, Cardinal, 234
 Picard, Alphonse, 141
 Piolin, Dom, 134
 Pitra, Cardinal, 44
 Pommier, Jean, 229 *n.*
 Pontmartin, H. de, 228 *n.*
 Port, Célestin, 113
 Portais, Charles Louis,
 114 and *n.* 2
 Pozzi, 125
 Prat, F., 152 and *n.* 2
 Pratt, J. B., 33 *n.* 1
 Préaubert, E., 100, 102
 Premonstrants, the, 90
 Pressensé, E. de, 125
Prêtre, Le, 52 *n.*
Progrès de Lyon, Le, 234
n. 1
 Proudhon, 137
Province du Maine, La,
 117
 Provost, 32 *n.* 4
 Puniet, Dom J. de, 46 *n.* 2

 QUATREBARBES, Comte
 de, 106
Questions Actuelles Les,
 247 *n.* 1

 REDEMPTORISTS, 42
 Reinach, Salomon, 99
n. 1, 130 *n.* 2
 Renan, 18, 19, 74 *n.* 2,
 125, 129 *n.* 1 and 130 *n.*,
 174, 185 *n.* 2, 189 *n.* 1,
 190, 246, 260
 Renou, Mgr., 195, 202
 and *n.*
 Renusson, 153 *n.*
 Respighi, Cardinal, 213,
 214, 215
 Reveillère, 238
 Réville, Albert, 189
 — Jean, 189, 242
Revue Apologétique, 259
n. 4
 — *Archéologique*, 99
n. 1
 — *de l'Anjou*, 106,
 117, 136
 — *de l'Histoire des
 Religions*, 96 *n.*, 208
 — *des Deux Mondes*,
 82 *n.* 2, 188 *n.*, 218,
 228 *n.*
 — *des Facultés Catho-
 liques de l'Ouest*, 16 *n.* 1
 — *d' Histoire et de
 Littérature Religieuses*,
 98, 126
 — *Fénelon*, 196
 Richard, François, Car-
 dinal, Archbishop of
 Paris, 143, 153, 159,
 160, 181
 Ritter, Ch., 168
 — E., 168
 Rodriguez, 47, 54
 Roger, Alexandre, 12 *n.*
 Rogers, 238
 Rohrbacher, 184
 Rousseau, J. J., 168
 Roussin, 234
 Ruchaud, 23 *n.* 1, 50, 51
 Rumeau, Mgr. J., Bishop
 of Angers, 107, 112,
 114, 115, 116, 117, 119,
 120, 123, 126 *n.* 1, 131,
 132, 133 and *n.* 2, 144,
 145, 146, 147, 148, 149,
 150, 151, 152, 153, 154,
 155, 159, 160, 161, 162,
 163, 164, 167 and *n.* 1,
 168, 169, 174, 179, 181,
 186, 258
 Ruspoli, 205

 SABATIER, 169 and *n.* 2,
 170, 171 and *n.* 1, 172

and *ns.* 2 and 3, 173
 and *n.* 3, 174, 175, 176
 and *n.* 1, 177, 189 and
n. 2, 224, 225 and *n.* 1,
 226
 San Giuliano, 205-6
 Satolli, 169
 Sauton, Dom, 70 *n.* 1
 Scherer, E., 188
 Schneider, Edouard, 169
n. 1
 Schrader, 173
 Schwarz, 44 *n.* 1, 50
 Seigneret, Paul, 103
Semaine Religieuse, of
 Angers, 10 *n.* 1, 23 *n.* 1,
 106, 121 *n.* 1, 158, 160,
 161
 — of Besançon, 222
 — of Cambray, 232
n. 1
 — of Paris, 160
 — of Verdun, 197 *n.* 1
 Semeria, Father, 171
Siècle, *Le*, 174, 175 and
n. 2, 191 *n.* 1, 198, 199,
 203, 204, 211, 212 *n.* 3,
 218, 221 and *n.* 222,
 223, 224, 226 *n.* 1, 228,
 229, 230 *n.* 2, 237 *n.* 1,
 244, 248, 258 *n.* 2
 Silos, 66, 67 *n.* 1, 69, 70,
 72
 Smedt, Ch. de, 184, 185
Soleil, *Le*, 8
 Souben, Dom, 71
 Spalding, J., 187 *n.* 2
 Spalletti, Contessa, 205

Steinhuber, Cardinal,
 169, 182
 Stendhal, 21 and *n.* 2
 Strauss, 168
 Sueur, Mgr., 195, 200 *n.* 2
 Sulpicians, 18, 21, 24,
 197 *n.* 2
 Svampa, Archbishop of
 Bologna, 208
 TACCI, Mgr., 233
 Taxil, Léo, 83
Temps, *Le*, 216, 217, 218,
 219, 221 and *n.* 223,
 224, 225, 229 and *n.*
 Tertu, Countess of, 61
 Thérèse Marie Cécile du
 Sauveur, 194 and *n.* 2,
 201, 202
 Thomas, the Rev. John,
 215 *n.* 1
Times, *The*, 230 and *ns.*
 1 and 2
 Timon David, Abbot, 43
 and *n.* 1
 Toitou, Abbé, 231, 232,
 234
 Torre, Andrea, 205
 Tronson, 26
 Turmel, 187
 Tyrrell, Father, 167 *n.* 1,
 243, 249, 257 *n.* 3
 UNAMUNO, Miguel, 255
n. 1
Univers, *L'*, 133 *n.* 2,
 220, 230, 251, 252 *n.* 4,
 253 *n.* 1, 258 *n.* 2

Urseau, 111
 Uzureau, Fr., 111
 VALLET, 19 *n.* 2
 Valroger, H. de, 141
 Vannutelli, 167 *n.* 2
 Velasquez, 74
Vera Roma, *La*, 161
 Verdier, Canon Célestin,
 16 *n.* 1, 89
Vérité Française, *La*,
 151, 152, 153, 161, 178,
 179, 212 *n.* 2, 223
 Veuillot, Louis, 235
 Victoria, Queen, 93
Vigie, *La*, 24 *n.* 2
 Vigouroux, Fulcran, 18,
 24, 125, 142, 247
 Villada, 72, 73
 Villard, Mgr., 250
 Villatte, René, 232, 233
 Vitelleschi, 204, 206 and
n. 1, 207
 Vivès y Tuto, Cardinal,
 167 *n.* 2, 215
 Vogüé, E. M. de, 82 and
n. 2, 228 *n.* 1
 Voltaire, 57 and *n.* 100,
 134
 WALDECK-ROUSSEAU,
 199
 Wendte, Charles W.,
 239 *n.*
 Wilpert, Mgr., 205
 ZIEGLER, 205 and *n.* 1

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92

Houtin, A.

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92

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